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INTER MISSION

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DIEGO SIMEONE

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YOURI DJORKAEFF JUVENTUS SOL CAMPBELL SPAIN

Scientists find new product that can increase your stamina, power and strength by up to 25%

Research shows Creatine can help Sportsmen such as Footballers and Rugby players produce more explosive power for longer, as well as increase recovery after intense exercise

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Ashley Ward - Professional Footballer

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March 1999

ON PAPER, Manchester United v Internazionale is a terrific tie in the great tradition of the European Cup. In reality, the match is a fraud. Neither team won their respective League championship last season. Inter won the UEFA Cup but declined to defend that title, preferring instead to cash in on their status as Serie A runners-up by competing in the Champions League.

At the risk of sounding like King Canute, it would be a sad day if either team became the first non-champion club to win the European Cup. But we live in changing times, and that outcome is a strong possibility this season. Hence our comprehensive match previews, starting on page 14.

The expansion of the Champions League goes a long way to explaining Sepp Blatter's recent comments on the World Cup. We have not dwelt for long on the proposal for a World Cup every two years, suffice to say that the whole episode could turn out to be an almighty storm in a very small tea cup. The real issue is not how often the World Cup is held but what importance we attach to international football as more and more clubs cash in on Europe's premier club competition. It's a debate that will run and run in these pages over the coming months. ***Gavin Hamilton, Editor***

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Keir Radnedge
Executive Editor
COMMENTARY

Blatter's challenge to Europe is the shape of things to come

If clubs provide, should countries pay?

Calling for revolution...Bayern's Uli Hoeness

SEPP BLATTER has Lennart Johansson on the back foot – this time over the UEFA president's favourite subject, Europe's top clubs.

FIFA president Blatter may feel empowered to do so because he drew a surprising number of European votes in his bigger-than-expected victory over Johansson at last year's Paris Congress.

Now Blatter, for all his dedication to the world game, knows as well as anyone else that Europe, governed by UEFA, provides not only the energy that drives world football but around 90 per cent of its finance.

In the past UEFA and FIFA have lived comparatively happily side by side. FIFA have concentrated on national team competitions and the philosophy of football, while UEFA have administered the powerful club tournaments. Now, however, Blatter is starting to tread on UEFA territory.

First came his determination – expressed while Joao Havelange was still in office – to press forward with plans for an eight-team world club championship early next year; secondly, Blatter demanded a streamlining of the international calendar, a move that will answer European club complaints over the loss of key players to oddly-timed far-flung internationals; and thirdly – and perhaps most important – he suggested that national associations pay players' wages when they are on international duty.

Blatter says: "It is only proper that when the national associations are using the players, then the clubs which are paying the wages of the players should be rewarded for that. The national team should give something to the club when they're using the player. I appreciate some clubs fear that players may soon be contributing too much to national teams.

"Look at the big European clubs – not all their players are European. These players would like to go back and play for their national teams and therefore we must find a balance which suits the players and federations but also the clubs."

The suggestion that FAs pay all or most of the wages while players are on international duty has delighted one faction within the powerful German lobby in international football's corridors of power.

Bayern Munich, whose president Franz Beckenbauer is now a senior federation officer and may yet aspire to become FIFA boss one day, have been vociferous in their call for this financial revolution.

General manager Uli Hoeness said: "Clubs now pay such huge amounts of money to players – especially since the Bosman ruling – that it is ridiculous to expect us to go on footing the bill even when our stars are away playing for someone else.

"National associations earn a lot of TV money for their matches. It's time they took over paying players' wages when they have their use. They have had an easy ride so far."

Sergio Cragnotti, president of Lazio, also feels strongly about the club v country issue.

When centre-back Alessandro Nesta damaged knee ligaments playing for Italy at the World Cup finals in France, Cragnotti sued the Italian federation for £4million – claiming not merely medical expenses and wages while the player was injured but an assessment of the loss of Nesta's value to the club while he was recovering from surgery.

A Spanish federation official, worried about the implication of having to pick up the tab for the highly-paid stars of Real Madrid and Barcelona, said: "We believe the present system works perfectly well and see no need for change. National associations call up players only seven or eight times a year.

"Also, bear in mind it's an honour for the players – and international selection increases their financial value to the clubs. It works both ways.

"Anyway, should associations be responsible for paying players their club wages when the associations have no say in contract negotiations? And where is the money to come from?"

Blatter and his supporters already have the answer to that one. Playing the World Cup every two years, as the FIFA president has proposed, most controversially, should help provide the extra funds.

Then who knows what other long-term plans Blatter may have in store to draw the clubs in his direction?

A scandal with no surprises

THE BIGGEST surprise about the Olympic Games scandal was that anyone was surprised. Speculation and cynicism, publicly expressed in the print media at least, have surrounded the process for years. (Incidentally, why did BBC Radio go so madly overboard in its wall-to-wall coverage of the issue?)

At least football can say that bidding for the World Cup has never been thus tainted, although the Japan v South Korea battle to win host rights to 2002 was heading in that direction. The pair of them spent around £65million on their campaigns – and that did not involve only glossy coloured brochures.

As Lennart Johansson says: "There were no limits – a bottle of whisky, a camera, or a computer, all of which I sent back. Everything appeared to have been considered permissible."

Fellow FIFA vice-president David Will recalls: "I said to Japan and Korea: 'I am not coming to any more receptions, I am not accepting any more gifts.' The only thing missing was the cash in the plain brown envelope. It was unbelievable."

But where is the line between fostering good relations and bribery? Hard to tell. England's contribution of coach Peter Withe to the Thai national team effort recently provoked a raising of eyebrows. Further back, so did UEFA's Meridian Agreement with Africa at a time when Johansson was developing his campaign for the FIFA presidency.

At the least, FIFA can boast a more economical procedure than the International Olympic Committee, one of whose members, former FIFA president Joao Havelange, was alleged to have enjoyed somewhat excessive hospitality offered by Amsterdam's would-be Olympic organisers.

However, whereas all 120 eligible members of the IOC vote on the Olympic venue, the World Cup decision is taken by 'only' the 24-man FIFA executive.

Comparatively cheap at the price...?

Understanding Stan

SO, ASTON VILLA may be ready to consider offers from clubs wishing to take poor, confused Stan Collymore off their hands.

You would think, with his track record, that nobody would want to touch Collymore with a bargepole. Wrong. The more challenging a player, the longer the queue of managers who believe they have the reforming secret.

Brian Clough, in his heyday at Nottingham Forest, was one manager who DID possess the magic touch. Remember how he turned around the likes of John Robertson and Kenny Burns?

Come to think of it, Forest might be an appropriate venue to which Collymore could return. After all, he could play in the weeks Pierre Van Hooijdonk didn't fancy it, and vice versa.

Up and away...Lombardo is happy to be back home

Lombardo's in the sun again

THE ENGLISH admire Italian footballers, it seems, but only as long as they stay in Italy.

Roberto Di Matteo of Chelsea has made little secret of his interest in returning to *calcio* as soon as it suits him. His manager, Gianluca Vialli, has commented bitterly on some of the snide remarks fired in his direction. Now Attilio Lombardo has joined the queue of whingers.

Hardly had he touched down in Rome after a disappointing stint with Crystal Palace than he was complaining, too.

"I thought I would end my football career in England," said Lombardo. "But finding myself back home is a great 33rd birthday present. Leaving a crisis-torn club like Crystal Palace for a side chasing the Serie A title is everything I could have hoped for. Going to England was an experience, but they don't like us Italians over there.

"The English find it hard to admit that there is a way of football better than their own. Besides, the sunshine you find in Rome is something I never saw in London. Sometimes you get entire weeks when it never stops raining."

True or false? True on one count, at least – a vast majority of players and officials in the Premiership DO find it hard to admit the English game may not be the greatest in Europe, let alone the world.

So remind me, please. When did an English club last win the Champions League?

All for one... perhaps

MORE evidence that Africa is not the united power block which Lennart Johansson so disastrously assumed throughout his bid for the FIFA presidency.

Johansson believed that, because he had the support of African confederation president Issa Hayatou and his executive, that was that for the continent. Not at all – as Sepp Blatter proved.

Now internal African soccer rivalries – more like jealousies – have prompted Egypt, Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria to challenge South Africa's self-assumed status as African challengers to host the World Cup in 2006.

"We all have to get behind one candidate. It's silly to have five countries in the bid," says Leo Mugabe, president of the Zimbabwean FA and a CAF executive member.

Easier said than done. As Hayatou observes: "We cannot tell our members what to do."

Johansson might think it was unfortunate that Hayatou did not point that out to him, say, a year ago.

Carlos 1 Claudio 0

Boot boy...Caniggia is keen to return

WHAT was it about the Diego Maradona generation that made so many of those players such objectionable characters?

Maradona was one of the greatest players of all time but a street urchin as both boy and man.

Now consider the case of Claudio Caniggia, the long-haired flyer who starred along with *El Pibe* at the 1990 World Cup.

Caniggia has spent the past six months hopping between Europe, Florida and Argentina, enjoying the fruits of his well-paid labour. Now he has decided he fancies playing again.

Not for Boca Juniors, who hold his registration. Boca can't pay the sort of money 33-year-old Caniggia believes he's still worth. Nevertheless he has asked the club if he can train with the first-team squad, and even play the occasional game, while his agent touts him around.

Caniggia, I understand, was somewhat miffed and surprised when Boca coach Carlos Bianchi did not go all weak-kneed at the prospect. Bianchi says: "I explained to Caniggia very clearly that I have two top-class attacking players in Martin Palermo and Guillermo Schelotto, who have just won the championship for us, and I am happy to stick with them.

"I don't mind Caniggia training with us – but playing for us is something else entirely."

Down and in...Vialli wins the penalty that saved Chelsea's FA Cup place

A hard lesson at Oxford

MIKE REED, predictably, took a battering for awarding the overtime penalty with which Chelsea snatched an FA Cup draw away to Oxford. Let's face it, Chelsea inspire Manchester United-like emotions right now: either you love them or hate them. If Kevin Francis had handled on the goal-line, instead of fouling Gianluca Vialli, Reed would have been pilloried in some quarters for awarding a penalty.

As it is, many people have not yet caught up with the changed interpretation of the tackle from behind. If you take the man, it's a foul – whether the player gets the ball or not.

Keir Radnedge reports from the FIFA gala night in Barcelona

ZZ top again

ZINEDINE ZIDANE completed a remarkable awards hat-trick when he received the FIFA Footballer of the Year prize at a star-studded gala in Barcelona. He had been odds-on favourite ever since he scored the two goals which laid the foundation for France's 3-0 win over Brazil in the World Cup Final in Paris last July. But there was much more to his success than that because he also played a significant role for Juventus in their Italian title success and their run to the Champions League Final.

Zidane thus added the FIFA accolade to the European Footballer of the Year award (from *France Football*) and *World Soccer's* Player of the Year crown. "It's fabulous for me," he said. "But I can accept the award only on the understanding that I am the representative of the teams for whom I play." On that basis, Zidane was right – he was the symbol of the French triumph last summer.

His World Cup was not without controversy, however. He began it under enormous pressure, which threatened to submerge him, when he was sent off in the second group match, against Saudi Arabia, for stamping on a defender. That meant Zidane missed not only the group match against Denmark – which hardly mattered, and he probably would have been rested anyway – but the high-tension second-round tie against Paraguay, which France won with a golden goal.

That Zidane picked up his game so remarkably when it mattered was the hallmark of a true champion – as his latest award recognised.

The Frenchman was the first choice of most national coaches – whose votes decide the award – and the overwhelming majority had him somewhere in their top three. But some of the players named were less predictable. Oman coach Valdeir Vieira made Iran striker Ali Daei his top choice and put Paulo Wanchope, the erratic Derby County and Costa Rica forward, in third. Other unusual top-three choices were Italy's Fabio Cannavaro, selected by Bobby Gould of Wales, and England's Darren Anderton, placed second by Ghana's Guiseppe Dossena.

The 1998 Fair Play Prize was awarded jointly to the national associations of Iran, the USA and Northern Ireland. FIFA president Sepp Blatter noted that the Iranians and Americans had provided a "powerful demonstration of the effects of fair play" when their national sides met at France 98 and exchanged flowers and gifts beforehand. The Irish Football Association earned its share of the award for the continuing efforts to reunite the Catholic and Protestant communities.

Hat-trick man...Zinedine Zidane scooped three major awards for 1998

FULL AWARDS LIST

Ball winner...Ronaldo strikes gold

FIFA World Player of the Year – Zinedine Zidane
Team of the Year – Brazil
FIFA Fair Play Prize for 1998 –
US Soccer Federation, Iran Football Federation, Irish Football Association (N Ireland).

1998 World Cup
Golden Ball – Ronaldo (Brazil)
Silver Ball – Davor Suker (Croatia)
Bronze Ball – Lilian Thuram (France)
Golden Shoe – Davor Suker (Croatia)
Silver Shoe – Gabriel Batistuta (Argentina) and Christian Vieri (Italy)
Best goalkeeper (Yashin award) – Fabien Barthez (France)
Most Entertaining Team – France
Fastest Goal – Celso Ayala (Paraguay)
Fair Play Award – England and France

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1991
1 Lothar Matthaus (Ger)
2 Jean-Pierre Papin (Fra)
3 Gary Lineker (Eng)
Number of coaches voting: 66

1992
1 Marco Van Basten (Hol)
2 Hristo Stoichkov (Bul)
3 Thomas Hassler (Ger)
Coaches voting: 71

1993
1 Roberto Baggio (Ita)
2 Romario (Bra)
3 Dennis Bergkamp (Hol)
Coaches voting: 71

1994
1 Romario (Bra)
2 Hristo Stoichkov (Bul)
3 Roberto Baggio (Ita)
Coaches voting: 83

1995
1 George Weah (Lib)
2 Paolo Maldini (Ita)
3 Jurgen Klinsmann (Ger)
Coaches voting: 95

1996
1 Ronaldo (Bra)
2 George Weah (Lib)
3 Alan Shearer (Eng)
Coaches voting: 120

1997
1 Ronaldo (Bra)
2 Roberto Carlos (Bra)
3 Dennis Bergkamp (Hol) and Zinedine Zidane (Fra)
Coaches voting: 121

HOW THE COACHES VOTED

COUNTRY	COACH	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Afghanistan	Mir Ali Asghar Akbarzdah	Ronaldo	Zidane	Bergkamp
Albania	Astrit Hafizi	Zidane	Ronaldo	Del Piero
Algeria	Ighil Ali	Zidane	Rivaldo	R Carlos
Angola	Vesselin Jelusic	Zidane	Rivaldo	Batistuta
Antigua/Barbuda	Zoran Vranesh	Suker	Zidane	Mijatovic
Argentina	Jose Nestor Pekerman	Zidane	Davids	Owen
Armenia	Souren Barsegian	Suker	Zidane	Vieri
Australia	Raul Blanco	Zidane	Bergkamp	R Carlos
Austria	Herbert Prohaska	Zidane	Ronaldo	Thuram
Azerbaijan	Vagit Sadikhov	Zidane	Rivaldo	Del Piero
Barbados	Eyre Sealy	Batistuta	Zidane	Ronaldo
Belarus	Mikhail Vergeenko	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
Belgium	Georges Leekens	Zidane	Blanc	Ronaldo
Bolivia	Hictor Veira	Weah	R Carlos	Owen
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Musovic Dzemaludin	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
British Virgin Islands	Gregory Grant	Davids	Denilson	Desailly
Bulgaria	Dimitar Dimitrov	Zidane	Ronaldo	Owen
Burkina Faso	Didier Notheaux	Zidane	Batistuta	Thuram
Canada	Holger Osieck	Zidane	F De Boer	Batistuta
Cape Verde Islands	Oscar Duarte	Batistuta	Desailly	Ronaldo
Central African Rep	Sebastien Ngato	Suker	Ronaldo	Zidane
Chile	Nelson Acosta	Zidane	Davids	Suker
China	Bob Houghton	Zidane	Ronaldo	Vieira
Colombia	Javier Alvarez Arteaga	Zidane	Suker	Rivaldo
Cook Islands	Alex Napa	Bergkamp	Owen	Batistuta
Costa Rica	Francisco Maturana	Zidane	F De Boer	Owen
Croatia	Miroslav Blazevic	Zidane	Rivaldo	Desailly
Cyprus	Panicos Georgiou	Zidane	Cafu	Chilavert
Czech Republic	Josef Chovanec	Zidane	Suker	Ronaldo
Denmark	Bo Johansson	Zidane	Desailly	Suker
Ecuador	Carlos Torres Garces	Zidane	Ronaldo	Thuram
Egypt	Mahmoud El Gohary	Zidane	Ronaldo	Overmars
England	Glenn Hoddle	Zidane	Bergkamp	Ronaldo
Equatorial Guinea	Pedro Mabale Fuga	Rivaldo	Chilavert	Zidane
Eritrea	Moshir Osman	Ronaldo	Zidane	Batistuta
Estonia	Teitur Thordarson	Zidane	Ronaldo	Rivaldo
Ethiopia	Seyoum Abate Bekele	Ronaldo	Zidane	Suker
Faroe Islands	Allan Simonsen	Zidane	Owen	B Laudrup
Fiji	Billy Singh	Zidane	Suker	Rivaldo
Finland	Richard Moller Nielsen	Shearer	Suker	Desailly
France	Roger Lemerre	Ronaldo	Overmars	Rivaldo
Georgia	Vladimir Gutsaev	Zidane	Ronaldo	Owen
Germany	Erich Ribbeck	Zidane	Davids	Van der Sar
Ghana	Giuseppe Dossena	Zidane	Anderton	Nakata
Greece	Anghel Iordanescu	Ronaldo	Zidane	Hagi
Guam	James Santos	Ronaldo	Seedorf	Zidane
Guatemala		Zidane	Suker	F De Boer
Holland	Frank Rijkaard	Zidane	Desailly	Hierro
Hong Kong		Dunga	Ronaldo	Salas
Hungary	Bertalan Bicskei	Zidane	Ronaldo	Desailly
Iceland	Gudjon Thordarson	Zidane	Suker	Thuram
Indonesia	Bernhard Schumm	Zidane	Desailly	Chilavert
Iran	Jalal Talebi	Zidane	Suker	Bergkamp
Iraq	Akram Salman	Zidane	Suker	Ronaldo
Israel	Sharf Shlomo	Zidane	Suker	Owen
Italy	Dino Zoff	Zidane	Mijatovic	Thuram
Ivory Coast	Me Gbonke Tia Martin	Zidane	Batistuta	Barthez
Jamaica	Rene Simoes	Zidane	Desailly	Batistuta
Japan	Philippe Troussier	Zidane	Suker	Deschamps
Jordan		Zidane	Rivaldo	Ronaldo
Kazakhstan		Zidane	Suker	Bergkamp
Kuwait	Milan Macal	Zidane	R Carlos	Del Piero
Kyrgystan	Evgeniy Novikov	Zidane	Ronaldo	Shevchenko
Latvia	Revaz Dzodzuashivili	Ronaldo	Zidane	Veron
Lebanon	Mahmoud Saad	Zidane	Bergkamp	Suker
Liechtenstein	Ralf Loose	Zidane	Deschamps	Bierhoff
Lithuania	Kestutis Latoza	Zidane	Suker	Bergkamp
Luxembourg	Paul Philipp	Zidane	Thuram	Davids
Macedonia	Goko Hadzievski	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
Madagascar	Vincent Randriamirado	Zidane	Owen	Cafu
Malaysia	Hatem Souissi	Zidane	Ortega	Salas
Malta	Josef Ilic	Zidane	Ronaldo	Deschamps
Mauritius	Cadrivel Dorasami	Suker	Zidane	Owen
Mexico	Manuel Lapuente	Ronaldo	Del Piero	Owen
Moldova	Ivan Daniliants	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
Morocco	Henri Michel	Zidane	Batistuta	Rivaldo
Myanmar	Aye Maung	Zidane	Batistuta	Ronaldo
New Zealand	Ken Dugdale	Salas	Suker	Thuram
Niger	Soumaila Tiemogo	Zidane	Bergkamp	Okocha
Nigeria	Kasimawo Laloko	Zidane	Chilavert	Suker
North Korea	An Se Uk	Ronaldo	Suker	Zidane
Northern Ireland	Lawrie McMenemy	Zidane	Barthez	Bergkamp
Norway	Nils Johan Semb	Zidane	Ronaldo	Owen
Oman	Valdeir Badu Vieira	Ali Daei	Owen	Wanchope
Paraguay	Ranulfo Miranda	Suker	Owen	Zidane
Peru	Juan Carlos Oblitas	Zidane	Ronaldo	Okocha
Philippines	Juan Cutillas	Zidane	Petit	Suker
Poland	Janusz Wojcik	Zidane	Rivaldo	Batistuta
Portugal	Humberto Coelho	Zidane	Suker	Bergkamp
Republic of Ireland	Mick McCarthy	Salas	Owen	Desailly
Romania	Victor Piturca	Zidane	Mijatovic	Ronaldo
Russia	Anatoli Byshovets	Zidane	Ronaldo	Overmars
Rwanda		Zidane	Ortega	Owen
St Lucia	John Jacques	Zidane	Suker	Batistuta
San Tome e Principe		Figo	Rivaldo	Barthez
San Marino	Gian Paolo Mazza	Zidane	Vieri	Suker
Saudi Arabia	Otto Pfister	Batistuta	Davids	Suker
Scotland	Craig Brown	Zidane	Suker	Bierhoff
Seychelles	Voyo Gavoasevic	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
Sierra Leone	Sam Obi Merger	Suker	Batistuta	Barthez
Singapore	Barry Whitbread	Zidane	Suker	Salas
Slovakia	Jozef Jankech	Zidane	Desailly	Suker
Slovenia	Srecko Katanec	Zidane	Ronaldo	Suker
South Korea	Jung Moo Huh	Zidane	Ronaldo	Ortega
Spain	Jose Antonio Camacho	Mijatovic	Rivaldo	Lopez
Sudan	Ahmed Babiker El Faki	Ronaldo	Zidane	Owen
Surinam		Davids	Zidane	Chilavert
Swaziland	Francis Banda	Ronaldo	Zidane	Beckham
Sweden	Tommy Soderberg	Zidane	Thuram	Veron
Switzerland	Gilbert Gress	R De Boer	Petit	Zidane
Syria	Mosa Shammas	Zidane	Rivaldo	Owen
Tahiti	Richard Vansam	Zidane	Ronaldo	Owen
Taiwan	Chiang Mu-Tsai	Zidane	Suker	Owen
Tajikistan	Zoir Babaev	Zidane	Suker	Kluivert
Thailand	Chatchai Phaholphaet	Zidane	Bergkamp	Ronaldo
Tonga	Semisi Fasi	Ronaldo	Zidane	Suker
Trinidad & Tobago	O B Abegboye	Zidane	R Carlos	Thuram
Tunisia		Zidane	Ronaldo	Del Piero
Turkey	Mustafa Denizli	Zidane	Seedorf	R Carlos
Turkmenistan	Victor Pozjechevskiy	Zidane	Owen	Ronaldo
UAE	Carlos Manuel Queiroz	Zidane	Figo	R Carlos
Uganda	Asuman Lubowa	Zidane	Rivaldo	Suker
Ukraine	Josef Sabo	Zidane	Deschamps	Owen
Uruguay	Victor Pua	Zidane	Davids	Thuram
USA	Bruce Arena	Zidane	Ronaldo	Bergkamp
Venezuela	J O Pastoriza	Zidane	Batistuta	Owen
Vietnam	Alfred Riedl	Zidane	Bergkamp	Suker
Wales	Bobby Gould	Cannavaro	Zidane	Owen
Yemen	Salem Abdulrahman	Zidane	Bergkamp	Owen
Yugoslavia	Milan Zivadinovic	Ronaldo	Owen	Zidane
Zambia	Patrick Phiri	Ronaldo	Zidane	Owen
Zimbabwe	Bruce Grobbelaar	Ronaldo	Barthez	Zidane

THE STANDINGS

1 Zidane (518 points)
2 Ronaldo (164)
3 Suker (108)
4 Owen (43)
5 Batistuta (40)
6 Rivaldo (37)
7 Bergkamp (33)
8 Davids (26)
9 Desailly (23)
10 Thuram (14)
11= Salas, Roberto Carlos (13)
13 Mijatovic (12)
14= Barthez, Chilavert (9)
16= Figo, Deschamps (8)
18= F De Boer, Ortega, Del Piero (7)
21= Petit, Seedorf (6)
23= Ali Daei, Cannavaro, R De Boer, Dunga, Shearer, Weah (5)
29= Cafu, Overmars, Vieri (4)
32= Anderton, Blanc, Denilson (3)
35= Bierhoff, Okocha, Veron (2)
38= Beckham, Hagi, Hierro, Kluivert, B Laudrup, Lopez, Nakata, Shevchenko, Van der Sar, Vieira, Wanchope (1)

1st place = 5pts
2nd place = 3pts
3rd place = 1pt

Still on top

Brazilians stay first in revamped rankings

BRAZIL remain top of FIFA's new-look world rankings despite their defeat in last year's World Cup Final. World champions France stay second, while Germany have slipped back to fifth place from third. Italy, moving up four places, and Croatia, who reached the semi-finals of the World Cup last year after beating Germany in the quarters, are joint third.

The complicated system used to calculate the rankings has been revised and a "stabilising mechanism" has been introduced into the system to iron out what FIFA describes as "over-dramatic short-term fluctuations" in teams' positions. The rankings will also take into account only seven instead of eight games a year, and results over eight years rather than six years will be counted, which means the rankings now include performances over two World Cups.

Before finalising the revised rankings, FIFA canvassed opinion from within the world game – including that of *World Soccer's* Executive Editor Keir Radnedge.

Among the high risers under the new system are Portugal, up 19 places to 17th; Belgium, up 14 to 21st; and Bulgaria, up 19 places to 30th. Wales, up 23 places to 74th, are the biggest beneficiaries of the changes in the top 100.

Big fallers include Yugoslavia, down 10 to 16th; Japan, down 13 to 33rd; and Iran, down 19 to 46th.

Still first despite the gloom...Brazil

FIFA RANKINGS – JANUARY 1999 (previous month's ranking in brackets)

1.....Brazil (1)
2 .....France (2)
3 .....Italy (7)
3= .....Croatia (4)
5 .....Germany (3)
6 .....Argentina (5)
7 .....Czech Republic (8)
8 .....Holland (11)
9 .....Spain (15)
10 .....Romania (12)
11 .....England (9)
12 .....Mexico (10)
13 .....Norway (14)
14 .....Sweden (18)
15 .....Denmark (19)
16 .....Yugoslavia (6)
17 .....Portugal (36)
18 .....Austria (22)
19 .....Morocco (13)
20 .....Chile (16)
21 .....Belgium (35)
22 .....Paraguay (25)
23 .....United States (23)
24 .....South Africa (26)
24=...Slovakia (32)
26 .....Scotland (38)
27 .....Colombia (34)
28 .....Tunisia (21)
29 .....Poland (31)
30 .....Bulgaria (49)
30=...Russia (40)
32 .....Egypt (28)
33 .....Japan (20)
34 .....Ukraine (47)
34=...South Korea (17)
36 .....Saudi Arabia (30)
37 .....Zambia (29)
38 .....Israel (43)
39 .....Jamaica (33)
40 .....Ivory Coast (44)
41 .....Ghana (48)
42=...Cameroon (41)
42=...Turkey (57)
44 .....Rep of Ireland (56)
45 .....Hungary (46)
46=...Greece (53)
46=Iran (27)
48 .....Lithuania (54)
49 .....Kuwait (24)
50 .....Australia (39)
51 .....DR Congo (62)
52 .....China (37)
53=...Finland (55)
53= Georgia (52)
55 .....United Arab Emirates (42)
56 .....Bolivia (61)
57 .....Nigeria (65)
58 .....Macedonia (59)
59 .....Angola (50)
60 .....Iceland (64)
61 .....Ecuador (63)
62 .....Peru (72)
63 .....Uruguay (76)
64 .....Cyprus (78)
65 .....Switzerland (83)
66 .....Latvia (77)
67 .....N. Ireland (86)
68 .....Trinidad and Tobago (51)
69=...Thailand (45)
69= Costa Rica (67)
71 .....Guinea (79)
72 .....Togo (68)
73 .....Qatar (60)
74 .....Wales (97)
75 .....Zimbabwe (74)
76 .....Guatemala (73)
77=...Honduras (91)
77=...Algeria (71)
79 .....Mali (70)
80 .....Slovenia (88)
81 .....Namibia (69)
82 .....Uzbekistan (66)
83 .....Gabon (82)
84 .....Burkina Faso (75)
85=...Oman (58)
85=...El Salvador (92)
87 .....Mozambique (80)
88 .....Senegal (95)
89 .....Armenia (100)
90 .....Canada (101)
91 .....Albania (106)
92 .....Estonia (90)
93 .....Belarus (104)
94 .....Singapore (81)
95 .....Syria (84)
96 .....Kenya (93)
97 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina (96)
98 .....Malawi (89)
99 .....Iraq (93)
100 ...New Zealand (103)
101 ...Azerbaijan (99)
102 ...Lebanon (85)
103 ...Liberia (108)
104 ...Sierra Leone (111)
105=Uganda (105)
105=.Congo (112)
107 ...Moldova (116)
108 ...Indonesia (87)
109 ...Cuba (107)
110 ...Faroe Is (125)
111 ...Vietnam (98)
112 ...Kazakhstan (102)
113 ...Malaysia (113)
114 ...Sudan (114)
115 ...Tanzania (118)
116 ...India (110)
117 ...Bahrain (119)
118 ...Myanmar (Burma) (115)
119 ...Haiti (109)
120 ...Barbados (121)
121 ....Turkmenistan (122)
122 ...Fiji (124)
123 ...Malta (130)
124 ...Grenada (117)
125 ...Tajikistan (120)
126 ...Venezuela (129)
127 ...Luxembourg (143)
128 ...Tahiti (123)
129 ...Benin (127)
130 ...Jordan (126)
131 ...Hong Kong (136)
132 ...St Vincent and Grenadines (138)
133 ...Panama (131)
134 ...Solomon Is (128)
135....Liechtenstein (159)
136 ...Ethiopia (145)
137 ...St Kitts and Nevis (132)
138 ...Burundi (141)
139=.Gambia (135)
139=.Mauritius (148)
141 ...Sri Lanka (134)
142=.St Lucia (139)
142=.Niger (154)
144 ...Dominica (133)
145 ...Madagascar (150)
146 ...Yemen (146)
147 ...Mauritania (142)
148 ...Antigua and Barbuda (137)
149 ...Lesotho (140)
150 ...Kyrgyzstan (151)
151 ...Laos (144)
152 ...Swaziland (149)
153 ...San Marino (179)
154 ...Dominican Republic (152)
155 ...Bangladesh (157)
156 ...North Korea (158)
157=.Botswana (155)
157=.Cayman Is (153)
159=.Surinam (160)
159=.Libya (147)
161 ....Dutch Antilles (156)
162 ....Guinea-Bissau (165)
163 ...Taiwan (169)
164 ...Nepal (176)
165=.Andorra (171)
165=.Maldives (166)
165=.Guyana (161)
168 ...Macao (174)
169 ...Cape Verde Islands (167)
170 ...Tonga (163)
171 ...Cambodia (162)
172 ...Western Samoa (164)
173 ...Rwanda (170)
174 ...Papua New Guinea (172)
175 ...Cook Islands (173)
176 ...Pakistan (168)
177 ...Philippines (175)
178 ...Puerto Rico (182)
179 ...Vanuatu (177)
180 ...Bermuda (185)
181 ...Chad (178)
182 ...Aruba (180)
183 ...Seychelles (181)
184 ...Brunei (183)
185 ...Belize (186)
186 ...Nicaragua (188)
187 ...British Virgin Islands (187)
188 ...Palestine (184)
189 ...Eritrea (189)
190=.Equatorial Guinea (195)
190=.Djibouti (191)
192 ...Sao Tome e Principe (194)
193 ...Somalia (190)
194 ...Central African Republic (191)
195=.Mongolia (196)
195=.American Samoa (193)
197 ...Guam (197)
198 ...Anguilla (197)

TRANSFER TRAIL

John ALOISI	F	Portsmouth	Coventry
Jose Emilio AMAVISCA	M	Real Madrid	Racing Santander
Vitor BAIA	G	Barcelona	Porto (loan)
Nikola BALA	F	Rudar	Gradina
Federico BASAVILBASO	M	San Lorenzo	Tenerife
Alberto BELSUE	D	Real Zaragoza	Alaves
Nicola BERTI	M	Tottenham	Alaves
Albano BIZARRI	G	Real Avellaneda	Real Madrid
Rade BOGDANOVIC	F	Atletico Madrid	Werder Bremen
Gary CHARLES	D	Aston Villa	Benfica
Martin CIZEK	M	Sparta Prague	Munich 1860
Jordi CRUYFF	M	Man United	Celta Vigo (loan)
Ousmane DABO	M	Internazionale	Vicenza
Frank DE BOER	D	Ajax	Barcelona
Ronald DE BOER	M	Ajax	Barcelona
Mamadou DIALLO	F	Lillestrom	Duisburg (loan)
Kaba DIAWARA	F	Bordeaux	Arsenal
Paolo DI CANIO	F	Sheffield Wed	West Ham
Didier DOMI	D	Paris SG	Newcastle
DORIVA	M	FC Porto	Sampdoria
DUNGA	M	Free agent	Internacional
Wagneau ELOI	M	Lens	Monaco
Mohamed EMARA	M	Al Ahly	Hansa Rostock
Juan ESNAIDER	F	Espanyol	Juventus
Antonio ESPOSITO	M	Grasshopper	Extremadura
Samuel ETO'O	F	Real Madrid	Espanyol (loan)
FABIO JUNIOR	F	Cruzeiro	Roma
Iulian FILIPESCU	D	Galatasaray	Real Betis
Havard FLO	F	Werder Bremen	Wolverhampton
Marc Vivien FOE	M	Lens	West Ham
Steffen FREUND	M	Borussia Dortmund	Tottenham
Walter GAITAN	M	Rosario Central	Villarreal
GILBERTO	D	Cruzeiro	Internazionale
Thomas GILL	G	Duisburg	FC Copenhagen
Keith GILLESPIE	M	Newcastle	Blackburn
Stefano GIOACCHINI	F	Venezia	Coventry (loan)
Andy GORAM	G	Free agent	Motherwell
Tchiressoua GUEL	M	ASEC Abidjan	Marseille
Pavel HAPAL	M	Tenerife	Sigma Olomouc
John HARKES	M	DC United	Nottm Forest (loan)
John HARTSON	F	West Ham	Wimbledon
Thierry HENRY	F	Monaco	Juventus
Christophe HORLAVILLE	F	Le Havre	Metz
Marius IORDACHE	F	Universitatea Craiova	Villarreal
Matt JANSEN	F	Crystal Palace	Blackburn
Nwankwo KANU	F	Internazionale	Arsenal
Frode KIPPE	D	Lillestrom	Liverpool
Stefan KLOS	G	Borussia Dortmund	Rangers
Denis KLYUYEV	M	Schalke	Moscow Dynamo
Mohammed KONJIC	D	Monaco	Coventry
Andreas KOPKE	G	Marseille	Nurnberg
Willem KORSTEN	M	Vitesse Arnhem	Leeds (loan)
LEANDRO	F	Sporting Lisbon	Tenerife
Jens LEHMANN	G	Milan	Borussia Dortmund
Attilio LOMBARDO	F	Crystal Palace	Lazio
Javi LOPEZ	D	Deportivo La Coruna	Tenerife
Federico LUSSENHOFF	D	San Lorenzo	Tenerife
Mickael MADAR	F	Everton	PSG
Chris MARSDEN	M	Birmingham	Southampton
Andreas MAYER	M	Rosenborg	Aberdeen
Jason McATEER	M	Liverpool	Blackburn
Gazvydas MIKULENAS	F	Polonia	Croatia Zagreb
Scott MINTO	D	Benfica	West Ham
Kazuyoshi MIURA	F	Verdy Kawasaki	Croatia Zagreb
Alon MIZRAHI	F	Maccabi Haifa	Nice
Farid MONDRAGON	G	Independiente	Real Zaragoza
Guillermo MORIGI	M	Valencia	Velez Sarsfield
Marco NEGRI	F	Rangers	Vicenza (loan)
Eric NEVLAND	F	Man United	IFK Gothenburg (loan)
Perica OGNJENOVIC	M	Red Star Belgrade	Real Madrid
Ahmed OUATTARA	F	Basle	Extremadura
Carlton PALMER	M	Southampton	Nottm Forest
Igor PAMIC	F	Hansa Rostock	Grazer AK
Steinar PEDERSEN	D	Borussia Dortmund	IFK Gothenburg
Yvan PEREZ	F	Real Betis	Bordeaux
Martin PETROV	F	CSKA Sofia	Servette
PIER Luigi Cherubino Loggi	F	Real Zaragoza	Tenerife
Hector Mauricio PINEDA	D	Udinese	Mallorca (loan)
Hugo PORFIRIO	M	Benfica	Nottm Forest (loan)
Nenad PRALIJA	M	Espanyol	Hajduk Split
Martin PRINGLE	F	Benfica	Charlton
Karel RADA	D	Trabzonspor	Slavia Prague
Vladislav RADIMOV	M	Real Zaragoza	Moscow Dynamo
Alvaro RECOBA	F	Internazionale	Venezia (loan)
Laurentiu REGHECAMPF	D	Steaua Bucharest	Litex Lovech
Knut REINHARDT	D	Borussia Dortmund	Nurnberg
Pedro REYES	D	Colo Colo	Auxerre
Bruno RODRIGUEZ	F	Metz	PSG
Louis SAHA	F	Metz	Newcastle (loan)
Julio SALINAS	F	Yokohama Marinos	Alaves
Pablo SANCHEZ	M	Feyenoord	Alaves (loan)
Tony SANNEH	M	DC United	Hertha Berlin
Dejan SAVICEVIC	F	Milan	Red Star Belgrade
Stefan SCHWOCH	F	Venezia	Napoli
Denis SERBAN	M	Steaua Bucharest	Valencia
Lee SHARPE	M	Leeds	Sampdoria (loan)
Dario SIMIC	D	Croatia Zagreb	Internazionale
Hernan SOLARI	M	River Plate	Atletico Madrid
Rigobert SONG	D	Salernitana	Liverpool
John SPENCER	F	Everton	Motherwell
Miroslav STEVIC	M	Munich 1860	Borussia Dortmund
Frank STRANDLI	F	Panathinaikos	AaB Aalborg
Oscar TELLEZ	D	Valencia	Villarreal
Giorgio VENTURIN	M	Lazio	Atletico Madrid
Laurent VIAUD	M	Rennes	Extremadura
German VILLA	M	Espanyol	America (Mex)
Jean-Guy WALLEMME	D	Coventry	Sochaux
Ashley WARD	F	Barnsley	Blackburn
Sergei YURAN	F	VfL Bochum	Moscow Spartak
Pablo ZEGARRA		Sporting Cristal	Salamanca
Srdjan ZAHARIEVSKI	M	Sileks Kratovo	VfB Stuttgart

Second best...Jaap Stam started his career in the *Toto-Divisie*

EUROPE'S SECOND DIVISIONS

Strange but true

A Dutch Second Division club can finish 14th and still win promotion, says Klaas-Jan Droppert

THE DUTCH Second Division must be the ultimate dream of every football manager. No stressful battle against relegation and even when your club cannot possibly win the title, you can still gain promotion. But for how long will this situation last?

Up to now, Dutch professional football has consisted of only two leagues, because amateur clubs have no ambition to turn professional. The reason: the costs are too high, the earnings the same. Now, though, there are plans to create a top amateur league, just below the Second Division, in 2000-2001. That means relegation for Division Two sides will be possible.

The Second Division, named *Toto-Divisie* after the sponsor, the national lottery, is probably the strangest league in Europe. Where else has the 14th club in the table a theoretical chance to gain promotion? All you need to do is have a good run at the right time during the season and you are qualified for a play-off league to gain entry to the top flight.

During the season the normal competition is divided into four periods. The clubs finishing first in each of these periods join the overall runners-up and number three in the table, plus the 16th and 17th-placed teams in the First Division, in the play-offs for two places in Division One. (The top Second Division team overall gain automatic promotion.)

The formula means that Division Two clubs have something to play for all season. That often produces attractive, high-scoring matches. But there is a less joyful side to this. Promotion through the play-offs nearly always remains an illusion. First Division clubs often show there is a big difference in standard between the two leagues. At the moment Vitesse Arnhem and Heerenveen are the only promoted teams of the past decade to become a respected force at the highest level.

The enormous difference means the *Toto-Divisie* is unattractive for the top clubs of the country. Apart from Feyenoord, none of the First Division clubs co-operate with a satellite club in the lower league. Ajax, for instance, have contacts in South Africa, Ghana and Belgium, but not in Holland. Like the others, they are far more interested in buying players abroad.

Not surprisingly, the *Toto-Divisie* does not produce much young talent. This task is still reserved for the top clubs' youth systems. The result is that only three players from the Second Division ranks have reached the top in recent years: Jaap Stam (Man United), Bert Konterman (Feyenoord) and Ruud Van Nistelrooy (PSV).

At the moment Van Nistelrooy's former club, Den Bosch, lead the Division Two table. At the halfway point they were two points ahead of Emmen, while FC Groningen, relegated last season after 12 years in the First Division, were close behind.

Which club(s) will gain promotion this year is still an open book in Europe's strangest league.

Musisi is let off lightly

BEING a famous footballer helps when you run into trouble with the law in Uganda. Striker Majidi Musisi, the only export from Uganda playing in Europe, got off with just a £550 fine following two separate traffic accidents in Kampala, both of which involved pedestrians being knocked down and led to the death of one person.

A 30-year-old cyclist died and three were injured when Musisi was involved in the first accident, in August, shortly after scoring a hat-trick for his country in an African Nations Cup qualifier.

The second incident occurred on Christmas Day, with Musisi knocking down and injuring another pedestrian in Kampala.

Musisi, who plays for Dardanelspor in the Turkish League, appeared in court after spending two nights in jail. He was charged on 10 separate counts, including jumping bail, using a car with false number plates and drunk and reckless driving. The punishment was a £550 fine or 30 months in jail.

This lenient handling of the case is to be the subject of an appeal by the Ugandan government, after howls of protest in the local media.

Musisi told the court he had paid money to the family of the cyclist killed, Amon Wagaba, and to cover the costs of the others who had been injured.

Two years ago Musisi was involved in a high-profile rape and defilement case but the charges were later dropped.

He will still be considered for the Ugandan national team, says coach Asuman Lubowa. "We need his skills more than ever," he says.

Mark Gleeson

Across the divide

FEW TRANSFERS can have caused more surprise this winter than the one which saw Nikola Bala, a forward with Rudar from the Bosnian Serb League, join Gradina, who play in the country's mainly Muslim League.

Such a move is unprecedented in Bosnia, where football is divided along ethnic lines.

"I do not have any fear of playing for Gradina," said Bala, the top scorer in the Bosnian Serb championship. "I just want to help the club avoid relegation."

Lai gets his chance

A DEAF-MUTE player has been on trial with professional Singapore team Khalsa Rovers, according to local reports. Defender Lai Khai Yip, a 26-year-old technician, has impressed in his time with the club, and he believes the other players are growing used to having him in the side.

"It is quite frustrating sometimes, but the more I play with the team, the more my team-mates can learn to gesture to me what to do and what positions to take up, rather than shout at me," he told the *Straits Times* in a written reply to the newspaper's questions.

Rovers' general manager, Jita Singh, said: "He knows his disadvantages yet he came down for the trials. This shows that he is really keen and has tremendous courage. We can't deprive him of a chance just because he is deaf and mute."

Let's trust that referees go easy on the yellow cards if Lai fails to play to the whistle.

Brolin and the beast

FORMER Sweden star Tomas Brolin had a lucky escape just after New Year when his car was in collision with an elk.

Brolin walked away unhurt and later recognised how fortunate he had been: "My guardian angels helped me. I am very lucky not to have been injured."

The elk's condition is unknown.

Peter Neish

Clashed with elk...Tomas Brolin

Win a VIP trip to the 1999 UEFA Champions League Final

We've teamed up with mobile phone giants Motorola to offer World Soccer readers the chance to win a fantastic prize: a trip to Barcelona to see the 1999 UEFA Champions League Final.

The winner and a guest will be flown out to the Catalan capital by Motorola to watch the match. First-class seats at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium are guaranteed.

Fit for the Final...Camp Nou stadium

Three runners-up will each receive a top-of-the-range Motorola mobile phone, free connection and 12 months' line rental.

The competition is exclusive to World Soccer readers. To enter, all you have to do is answer correctly three questions, the first of which appears here. Question two will appear next month (April) and question three in the May issue. A coupon will appear in the May issue which you can use to send in your answers.

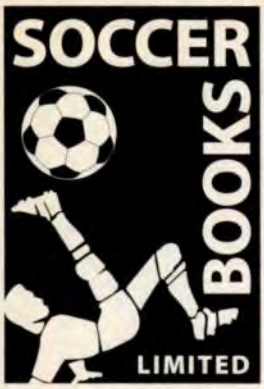
Good luck.

Winner...Christian Panucci celebrates victory in last year's Final

Question one:

Name the only club to be beaten in a European Cup Final played on their own ground.

Usual IPC competition rules apply.



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The new 2nd edition of this Spanish-language sister-title to the A-Z Europeo is now available. The information is easily understandable and contains statistical records for thousands of North, South and Central American players.

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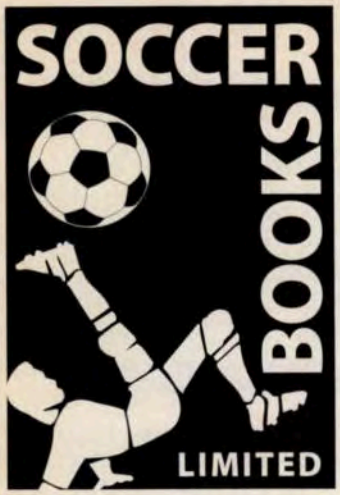

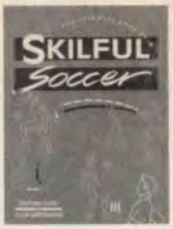

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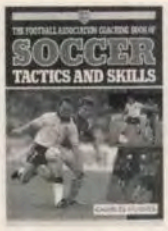

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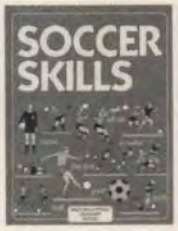

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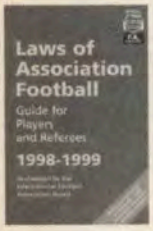

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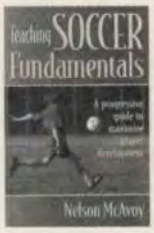

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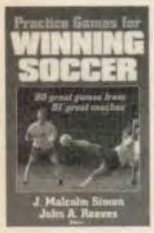

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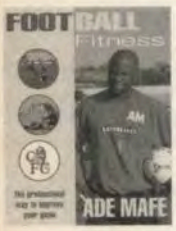

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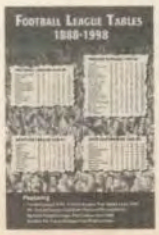

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All systems go

Ronaldo is flying high again, says Keir Radnedge

Ready, willing and able...fit-again Ronaldo can't wait to get at United

INTERNAZIONALE

HOW THEY LINE UP

Inconsistency is plaguing Inter, who in recent weeks in Serie A have hit six and five goals respectively against Venezia and Cagliari, but have also lost away to Parma and Bologna. New coach Mircea Lucescu seems to have settled on a 3-5-2 formation, but many questions remain unanswered. With Croat signing Dario Simic cup-tied, Nigerian Taribo West apparently Newcastle-bound and both Francesco Colonnese and Fabio Galante out of form, the rearguard is far from settled. Perhaps there will be a place for new Brazilian left-back Gilberto. Inter remain confident that Ronaldo is winning both the mental and physical battles, and in Roberto Baggio, Ivan Zamorano and young Nicola Ventola, Lucescu has plenty of attacking options.

MANCHESTER UNITED

HOW THEY LINE UP

The treble of Premiership, FA Cup and Champions League is still on, with United impressively grinding out results on all fronts. Since Christmas, Nottingham Forest, West Ham and Leicester have all been comprehensively seen off in the League and Alex Ferguson's side belied their so-called indifference towards the FA Cup by coming from behind to steal a late fourth round victory over Liverpool. Jordi Cruyff's loan move to Celta Vigo underlines United's strength in depth. In Phil Neville, Henning Berg, Jesper Blomqvist, Paul Scholes and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, they have a bench to die for.

RONALDO is putting in hard labour to reach peak fitness for the second half of the Italian season – and sweep Internazionale past Manchester United and on towards Champions League glory.

Pessimists in Italian and Brazilian football doubted, after his World Cup Final disaster, whether the 22-year-old striker would ever fulfil his potential. Their doubts appeared to be justified when his fragile state of health meant that he played only chunks of 13 out of Inter's first 27 matches, at home and abroad.

A holiday return to Rio de Janeiro, time spent relaxing with his family, friends and girlfriend, Susana Werner, plus one-on-one training sessions with personal physio Nilton Petroni, have produced a 'new' Ronaldo – one who is threatening to wipe the pitches of Europe with any and every opponent from here to the end of May.

"I've been working on my fitness like a madman," says Ronaldo. "I did two long, hard sessions each day. In particular, I've been working on building up muscle strength and acceleration. I'm happy to say that my right knee, which has been a problem for a long time, has stood up to it well. Inter also allowed me two extra days' holiday over Christmas and the New Year, which was a bonus."

Ronaldo was voted FIFA and *World Soccer* Footballer of the Year in 1997 and 1998, but believes that 1999 could be his best year yet. "It's going to be a fundamental year," he says, "in which I get my fitness right and my psychological approach right. Inter won't regret letting me stay in Rio a little longer. The club will get the benefit when I start playing again. Two years ago, after the first operation on my knee, I felt 100 per cent, so I played 100 per cent. I feel I'm back at that level.

"I can't wait to get back into the thick of the action, both in Italy and in Europe. I know we are five or six points behind the leaders at home but we have time to overtake them and win the championship. What's most important is to be consistent. We haven't managed that because of injuries. But that's behind us. I can't wait to be in the team regularly alongside Roberto Baggio. We've hardly played together because of injuries – but we are going to cause teams so many problems!"

Ronaldo won the Cup-winners Cup in 1996 with Bobby Robson's Barcelona and the UEFA Cup last season with Inter. Now he wants the Champions League to complete a hat-trick. Inter topped Group C thanks to a 3-1 win over holders Real Madrid which was one of their two best performances of the autumn (the other being the 4-1 League win over Roma).

"I want to win as much as possible this season," says Ronaldo. "Last year was a big disappointment because of what happened at the World Cup. It wasn't so much losing to France in the Final, it was the way we lost. I felt powerless to do anything about it. That was a scary feeling. So my ambitions are to win as much as possible with Inter, to start playing again for Brazil – and to become the best player in the world again. Winning the Champions League would help."

KEY BATTLES

Yorke and Cole v Inter's defensive markers
The mobility of Yorke and Cole up front will pose big problems for the ageing Bergomi and his less than convincing sidekicks.

Beckham v Simeone
Argentina v England revisited. Expect fireworks from two men with short-fuse tempers and a legacy of France 98 animosity.

Keane and Butt v Baggio
The Little Prince remains a match-winner of the highest order. His trademark runs from deep will have to be stopped at source.

March 3: United v Inter
March 17: Inter v United

Inter views on the big game

Dominique Antognoni asks the men from Milan to assess Manchester United

Q&A

	MIRCEA LUCESCU (coach)	**DIEGO SIMEONE**	**JAVIER ZANETTI**	**ZE ELIAS**
What do you think of Manchester United?	I like not only United but the whole atmosphere in British football.	I admire United. They are a powerful team, have some excellent players and their attacking style is good to watch.	United are impressive in every area of the game and very quick with it.	I like their approach, which is not the traditional English style.
What is their strength?	United are well organised as a team with the wide men, Beckham and Giggs, their key players.	The 90-minute pace at which they play every game. Their crosses can test the best defences, and Beckham and Giggs mean trouble for any full-back.	Attack – not so much Cole and Yorke, but the way they attack with two wide midfielders, Giggs and Beckham. That's how they appear to gain numerical superiority.	They are well-organised, especially in midfield. Keane is terrific.
What is their weakness?	The same organisation that is their strength – because it means, especially in the centre of midfield, that United are also very predictable.	Defence – they are a bit slow on the turn and can, I think, be vulnerable to a quick counter-attack.	When they don't have the ball, they're in trouble. They don't play well without the ball, they don't organise too well and leave some wide-open gaps.	The defence is too big and slow.
How will the tie be won?	I know how but I'm not telling. I would say that Italian football – tactically and psychologically – is far superior to English, and that can be decisive in itself.	The tie will be decided in midfield. My duel with Beckham? That was the World Cup. That was history. Inter is all that matters now.	Pace will decide it – and we are quicker.	The winning team will be the one who make fewer mistakes.
	FRANCESCO MORIERO	**RONALDO**	**FRANCESCO COLONNESE**	**MAURO MILANESE**
What do you think of Manchester United?	I'm a real fan of English football. I like United for everything they represent – tradition, great support, the atmosphere at Old Trafford.	Old Trafford is terrific, its atmosphere, its passion for football.	The way Old Trafford gets behind the team.	I'm mad about English football, especially Liverpool and Manchester United. I love the way they play at home.
What is their strength?	Ryan Giggs. He's fantastic.	Ryan Giggs. He's a constant danger for any defence because he is so unpredictable.	The two wide players, Giggs and Beckham. Then the strikers, Yorke and Cole. I'll be marking Yorke wherever he goes. I think I know how to handle him.	Their ability to hit on the break. It's brilliant how, when they get the ball back in midfield, they hit the two strikers as fast as they can.
What is their weakness?	Away from home they're not the same team.	None that I know of. Hopefully, we'll discover a few in Manchester.	The two centre-backs, Stam and Johnsen – they're incredibly slow.	United take risks; too many, I think. It will be easy to surprise them.
How will the tie be won?	The difference will be in the character and imagination of the two sets of players. Here Inter are clearly superior, and we are improving. We'll hit our peak just in time for the tie.	Imagination and character. Also, the team which holds its nerve, which keeps cool under pressure, will win.	The game in Manchester. We're going there to win. That will decide everything.	The second leg will be more important. The team that copes better with the big occasion will win. In the past that has given Italian teams an advantage over English clubs.

Serious contenders

Kyiv Dynamo are no longer dark horses, says Oleg Zadernovsky

Dynamo on a high...Arsenal were outwitted and outpaced by Kyiv in the group stage

KYIV DYNAMO not only qualified for the quarter-finals of the Champions League, but they did so in style, topping their group ahead of the champions of England and France – Arsenal and Lens – plus Panathinaikos, the runners-up in Greece.

But the fact that the Ukrainians had achieved the same feat in last season's competition meant that nobody in Europe should have been surprised by such an outcome.

Honorary president Grygory Surkis, the most powerful man at Kyiv, said: "I believed that our club were capable of repeating last year's success. Even immediately after the draw for this season's group stage I rated Kyiv more highly than their group rivals.

"The difference was that last year we were considered to be the dark horses of what was called a 'group of death' [Kyiv were drawn with PSV, Newcastle and Barcelona], while this time we started as favourites. Last year's success showed that there are no unbeatable opponents for Kyiv, a view clearly confirmed by our two victories over Barcelona."

There are several important reasons for Kyiv's growing prowess in Europe. In contrast to many of their Champions League rivals, who are forced to expend much effort in maintaining a strong challenge for their domestic league while also mounting their European campaign, Kyiv are in a position to use Ukrainian League fixtures virtually as training before vital European games.

Striker Serhii Rebrov, who has scored eight times in this season's Champions League, explains: "We have not got as strong a national championship as the likes of England, Germany and France. For us, the priority is the Champions League, as well as matches for the national team."

Kyiv's ability to win the Ukraine title every year has been a key factor in their European progress. This allows them to compete in the Champions League each season, offering them the type of experience which is now paying dividends.

"We are strong when we are together," says Rebrov. "We are one unit because we have been playing together in international competitions for several years."

Success breeds success, not only in terms of the experience it offers the players already at the club, but in attracting the

Group winners...Kyiv players celebrate their qualification for the quarter-finals

best youngsters from other sides. Rebrov, voted Ukrainian Player of the Year in 1998, was part of this flow of talent towards the country's dominant club.

"I appeared in the Soviet Union's top division at the age of 18, for Shakhtar Donetsk," Rebrov says. "The match against Kyiv Dynamo that season, when I scored only my second first-team goal, probably changed my whole career, because after that I was being watched by Dynamo scouts."

But Kyiv are adept at developing young talent of their own. Many current first-team players, including goalkeeper Olexander Shovkovskyi, defenders Vladyslav Vaschuk and Yurii Dmytrulin, and Rebrov's strike partner, Andrii Shevchenko, have come up through the ranks from the club's youth football school. What's more, by the time the youngsters make the first team, they are used to playing with their team-mates. This is because coach Valerii Lobanovskyi believes in letting the first, second and third teams all train together.

The current Kyiv side has international quality in every department. Shovkovskyi is a young but experienced goalkeeper who has proved his abilities both in the Champions League and for the Ukraine national team.

In defence, Vaschuk, whose goal against Lens put Dynamo into the quarter-finals, is the country's best libero; Olexander Holovko is a very reliable central defender, particularly good in the air; the right-sided Alexandre Khatskevitch was Belorussian Player of the Year 1998. In midfield, Valiantsin Bialkevich, another Belarus international, has taken over the central midfield role from Yuri Kalitvintsev, who has joined Trabzonspor in Turkey; the talented and versatile Andrii Husin often plays on the right, with all-rounder Dmytro Mykhailenko on the opposite side. Kakha Kaladze is a tough, ball-winning Georgia international.

Up front, Shevchenko and Rebrov form a lethal partnership. According to Rebrov: "The goals are created by the whole team. We are only finishers. But I could pass to my partner even if I was blindfolded."

With Kyiv's Champions League success in mind, it is no surprise that big clubs in Western Europe have been showing serious interest in buying the team's leading players. But Lobanovskyi and Surkis are set against parting with key players while the club's Champions League hopes are still alive. "We want to win the Champions League. To do so, we must have our best players. This is our intention. There is nothing more to say," says Lobanovskyi.

Only those approaching the veteran stage will be allowed to go, and Real Madrid can expect to face the vast majority of the big guns when the two sides meet in March in the quarter-finals.

Surkis says: "Recently, I went with Andrii Shevchenko to Milan. But no documents were signed. All that was agreed was that if Kyiv decide to sell Shevchenko, Milan will be considered as one of the first choices.

"Oleh Luzhnyi was on his way to Benfica, and had even been assigned a shirt number, but he was forced to return to Kyiv because, up to this time, Benfica have failed to present the necessary financial guarantees to allow the contract to go through. Holovko was on trial at Liverpool but will now continue his preparations for the new season with us."

Rebrov, another target for the top Western European sides, says: "Mentally I'm ready to play for a strong foreign club, but if I do move it will most likely be in the summer. Now, I'm thinking only about the forthcoming Champions League games."

Lobanovskyi's problem is not, therefore, keeping his team together – but keeping his team fit. The long eastern winter has always been a problem for clubs from the former Soviet Union. And last season ring-rusty Kyiv lost 5-2 on aggregate in the quarter-finals to Juventus. Perhaps with this in mind, preparation for the Real Madrid clashes began with Kyiv spending much of January at a training camp before playing matches in the annual CIS Cup. The team will have further training camps in Italy and Israel just before the first Real tie.

Fitness aside, Rebrov believes that the unity of the squad – no doubt helped by all that time spent together – will be one of Kyiv's key weapons against the Spanish champions. "For me, the most important thing in football is not what I do as an individual but what the whole team does and how it plays," he says. "I believe that this year will be the year of success for our club."

Thinking big...coach Lobanovskyi

KEY BATTLES

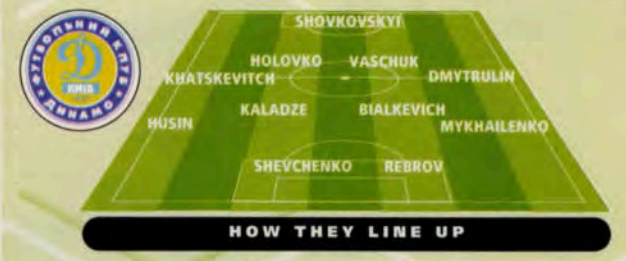
Shevchenko v the right side of the Real defence
Kyiv's ace attacker likes to drift to the left-flank, and if Seedorf's attacking instincts get the better of him, Real's Christian Panucci looks isolated.

Vaschuk and Holovko v Mijatovic and Raul
The Kyiv central defenders will have to find a way to shackle Real's classy strikeforce.

Kyiv midfield v Seedorf and Redondo
Real could be outgunned in this vital area if Seedorf and Redondo do not receive enough support.

March 3: Real v Kyiv
March 17: Kyiv v Real

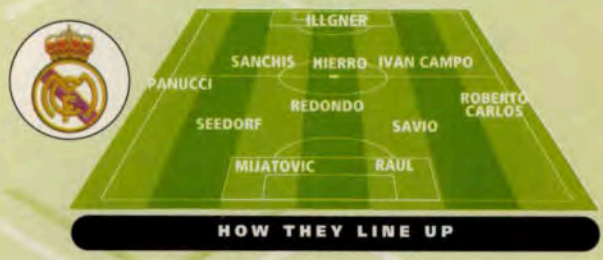
KYIV DYNAMO



HOW THEY LINE UP

The expected exodus of Kyiv talent has yet to happen. The deal which was supposed to take right-back Luzhnyi to Benfica finally fell through and if star strikers Shevchenko and Rebrov are to move to the West, it will not be until Dynamo have completed their Champions League commitments. Three points clear at the top of the Ukraine table at the winter break, coach Valerii Lobanovskyi can only hope that the mid-season lull has not blunted his team's competitive instincts.

REAL MADRID



HOW THEY LINE UP

League form of late has been patchy to say the least – a 2-1 defeat at Mallorca and a 4-0 thrashing at La Coruna coming either side of a 4-2 derby win over Atletico. Problems abound: the five-man defence used in recent weeks by coach Guus Hiddink is clearly not working, Roberto Carlos has gone public with his misgivings about it, while an unsettled Christian Panucci is said to be hankering for a return to Italy. One bonus is the return to form of striker Fernando Morientes, while new signing, Yugoslav international winger Perica Ognjenovic from Red Star Belgrade, could make an impact.

The final lifeline

It's Europe or bust for Juventus, says Paddy Agnew

Front-runner...Juve will be relying on Inzaghi for goals

THIS SEASON, more than ever, the Champions League desperately matters to Juventus, who have reached the last three Finals. They seem to be out of the running in the Serie A title contest and are already out of the Italian Cup, so have only the Champions League left by way of a trophy with which to 'salvage' the season.

As Juventus prepare for their Champions League quarter-final tie against Olympiakos of Greece, they do so against the background of an *autumnus horribilis* and with the sensation that all the good fortune and lucky breaks which went their way last year (including controversial refereeing decisions) have deserted them this time.

The season began badly, with Juventus caught in the eye of the whirlwind unleashed in their direction by the doping allegations from Roma's coach, the Czech Zdenek Zeman. From there on things got worse, with the next and perhaps most serious blow coming with the knee injury suffered by star striker Alessandro Del Piero in a November Serie A game against Udinese. The injury proved much more serious than initially anticipated, ruling Del Piero out for the rest of the season.

If you compare the last two Juventus seasons, you will note that in November 1997 the champions, rather than losing a star player (Del Piero), gained one in the shape of Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids. This season, the results following Del Piero's injury immediately and clearly underlined the gravity of the loss – Juventus went on a wretched three-month League run during which they won only one game (against lowly Salernitana) and fell to ninth in the table.

Then there was the far-from-glorious Champions League qualifying campaign, when the Old Lady of Turin picked up five consecutive draws and a last-match win to scramble into the quarter-finals from a relatively easy group with Athletic Bilbao, Galatasaray and Rosenborg.

These were bitterly disappointing results for a team who had won three Italian titles and a Champions Cup in four seasons under coach Marcello Lippi. In and around the Juventus camp important people started to mutter.

Despite Lippi's protestations that everything was still to play for and that his side might well end the season with a trophy, miserable autumn notwithstanding, fingers began to point, and in his direction, too.

In mid-December, Lippi ended months of speculation by confirming that he would be leaving Juventus at the end

KEY BATTLES

Djordjevic v Davids and Deschamps
All Olympiakos' best attacking moves pass through the Yugoslav playmaker Djordjevic. But there are no better harriers and chasers than the Juve midfield warriors.

Poursanidis or Karapialis v Zidane
The Greeks are bound to put out a man-to-man contract on Juve's French strategist supreme. Karapialis or Poursanidis can expect to be busy.

Anatolakis v Inzaghi
With Del Piero out of action and Esnaider still finding his feet, the onus is on Inzaghi to provide the Juve firepower. The solid Anatolakis will shadow him relentlessly.

March 3: Juve v Olympiakos
March 17: Olympiakos v Juve

of this season. Even though that same speculation suggests that he will take over from Romanian Mircea Lucescu at Inter, Lippi refused to name his next employer, saying only that he had spoken out about his decision to leave Juventus so as to end senseless media speculation which could prove a costly distraction.

As results went from bad to worse, key Juventus figures began to reflect aloud about the wisdom of Lippi's anticipated announcement. Usually a departing coach or player waits until the spring, closer to the end of the season, before confirming such plans.

On the day that Juventus drew 1-1 with bottom club Venezia in mid-January, honorary president Umberto Agnelli wondered if Lippi would "make it through right to the end" – presumably the end of the season. Then, 24 hours later, during a TV programme, managing director Luciano Moggi complained: "It's simply not normal that in December a coach announces his intention to leave. This is a situation that's difficult to handle."

Sensing the general drift from on high, Lippi was quick to defend himself, responding to his lords and masters in tetchy tones: "It seems that all the problems of a year that has so far been only partially negative stem from my announcement [of my departure]...I have always shared the merits [of our success] in equal part with my staff, with the players and the club. Consequently, all those things now going wrong can hardly be attributed to me alone."

Lippi went on to point out that, if his announcement had caused problems, then so too had the club's mid-January announcement that he would be succeeded by Carlo Ancelotti, a former Reggiana and Parma coach not especially liked by Juventus fans because of a playing past spent largely with two historic Juventus rivals, Milan and Roma.

At this point, a third member of the Juventus inner sanctum, club president Vittorio Chiusano, intervened with an apparent short, sharp wrap over the Lippi knuckles when commenting: "I was frankly surprised by the statements made by Marcello Lippi...and I would suggest that from now on it would be in the interests of everyone if words made way for facts, which are the only things that really count."

In other words, shut up and get on with it, which, presumably, is what Juventus intend to do.

If fortune has not exactly smiled on the club this autumn, at least luck seemed to go their way when they got Olympiakos, arguably the easiest draw, in the quarter-finals. Further, by the end of January the club had finally moved on the transfer front to (at least partially) replace Del Piero, with Argentinian Juan Esnaider (from Espanyol) and Thierry Henry (from Monaco).

Henry is cup-tied, having played for Monaco in the UEFA Cup this season, but Esnaider is an important extra attacking option to field alongside Filippo Inzaghi, especially with the latter having been suffering from a recurrent groin strain.

If Esnaider and Inzaghi are the probable first-choice Juventus attack, then the reserve strikers, Nicola Amoruso and the experienced Uruguayan Daniel Fonseca, provide important cover.

Earlier in the season we asked if Juventus had begun to lose that title-winning hunger. In particular, one wondered how much 'petrol' World Cup-winners Didier Deschamps and Zinedine Zidane had left in the tank. After a predictably low-key autumn from both, much of the rest of the Juventus season and their Champions League run will depend on the extent to which they re-find their best form.

Elsewhere in midfield, players such as Alessio Tacchinardi, Antonio Conte and Angelo Di Livio offer valid reference points, while the traditionally strong defence continues to rotate around five players – Uruguayan Paolo Montero, Croat Igor Tudor, Mark Iuliano, Ciro Ferrara and goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi – who certainly cannot claim to be suffering from France 98 blues: none of them played at the finals.

By way of conclusion, we suggest that while Juventus probably have compromised their League title campaign beyond repair, it would be foolish to rule them out of Champions League calculations. For a start, they could find that come semi-final time they will be all but mathematically out of the title contest, leaving them to concentrate on the Champions League and thereby giving them an advantage over the likes of Inter, Real Madrid, Manchester United etc.

Don't cry for me, Alex Del Piero...at least not yet.

In charge – for now...Marcello Lippi

JUVENTUS

HOW THEY LINE UP

Juve are at their lowest ebb for years. They are way off the Serie A pace, coach Lippi is seen as a semi-detached figure following his announcement that he was leaving in summer, star man Del Piero is a long-term absentee, and even World Cup heroes Deschamps and Zidane have come in for criticism for their so-so form. The signing of Esnaider and Henry smacks of panic. On the other hand, Juventus have abundant talent and experience, plus their rare gift of usually coming good on the big Euro occasion.

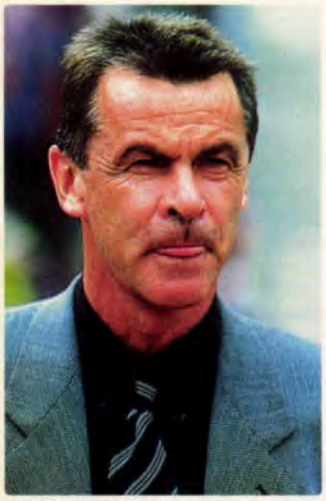
OLYMPIAKOS

HOW THEY LINE UP

The club from Piraeus have been warming up for their tie with Juventus by sweeping all before them in the Greek League. Thanks to six consecutive wins in December and January, Olympiakos moved six points clear of Panathinaikos, and a third straight title is a distinct possibility. With Dusan Bajevic's side doing so well domestically and in the Champions League, the question of squad reinforcements has not really arisen. There were rumours of a swap deal involving Olympiakos' Serb striker Ilija Ivic and Cagliari's unwanted Cameroon hit-man Patrick M'Boma, but it came to nought.

Fight to the finish

Hitzfeld and Rehhagel box clever about their all-German clash, writes Nick Bidwell



Confident...Ottmar Hitzfeld

Canny...Otto Rehhagel

NEVER mind that German boxer Axel Schulz is being lined up as Mike Tyson's next opponent. The all-Bundesliga Champions League quarter-final between Bayern Munich and Kaiserslautern, and the pitting of wits of their respective coaches, Ottmar Hitzfeld and Otto Rehhagel, represents the only real heavyweight clash on the sporting horizon.

Virtually all the smart deutschmarks are riding on Kaiserslautern, the reigning German champions, ending up on the canvas come March 17. Bayern Munich are the runaway Bundesliga leaders, boast a squad crammed with 17 internationals past and present, and they thumped the *Lauterer* 4-0 in a League game back in October.

But if anyone has the tactical wherewithal and motivational powers to engineer a shock, it is Rehhagel, the man who guided Kaiserslautern to promotion and the Bundesliga title in successive years, and created a winning dynasty at Werder Bremen in the Eighties and early Nineties.

His professional pride wounded by his sacking as Bayern coach late in the 1996-97 campaign, Rehhagel has already enjoyed a measure of revenge, hardly able to contain his delight when his Kaiserslautern side beat the *Munchner* home and away en route to the domestic title last season. Obviously, a spot of Champions League one-upmanship over the club who fired him would be even sweeter for 'King Otto', and ever the canny operator, he intends to play the underdog role for all it is worth.

"Bayern are naturally the favourites," observes Rehhagel. "Both financially and sport-wise, they are getting stronger all the time. Clearly they have a far better team than last season. Our 4-0 defeat in Munich last autumn did not flatter Bayern, though it has to be said that we had a few injuries at the time.

"We are already pleased to be in the quarter-finals, but we won't go into these two games as sacrificial lambs. I have a team here full of spirit, determination and the will to pull off a surprise. I have been in the game long enough to know that money doesn't always guarantee success. By winning the Bundesliga last season, we proved that favourites don't always come out on top."

Over at Bayern, Hitzfeld is talking a good Euro tie, too. The architect of Borussia Dortmund's surprise Champions League Final victory over Juventus in 1997, he is no stranger to continental glory nights and is confident his first season in charge of Bayern will be a landmark year for the club.

"The year after a title is invariably difficult to negotiate but I still consider Kaiserslautern to be one of the major forces in German football," says Hitzfeld. "However, Bayern regrouped and reinforced last summer and the result is that we now have the best squad in the country and should be German champions once again.

"As for the Champions League, it's my overwhelming desire to win this competition with Bayern, and on the basis of the football and results we have produced in the first half of the season, I feel we have as good a chance as anybody."

KEY BATTLES

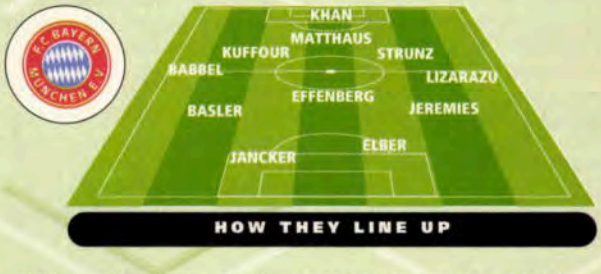
Kuffour v Marschall
Kaiserslautern marksman Marschall may not be the most elegant of players but he certainly knows where the goal is. Known for his cunning in losing his marker, he represents a big test for Ghanaian Kuffour.

Effenberg v Ballack
Effenberg is the heart and soul of Bayern, driving the team forward and scoring his share of goals too. German Under-21 international Ballack will need to be at his most tenacious to curb all-action 'Effe'.

Elber v Ramzy
Brazilian goal machine Elber has been in outstanding form. Ramzy, an Egyptian international, is arguably better as a sweeper but his speed and mobility could counter the quicksilver Elber.

March 3: Bayern v Kaiserslautern
March 17: Kaiserslautern v Bayern

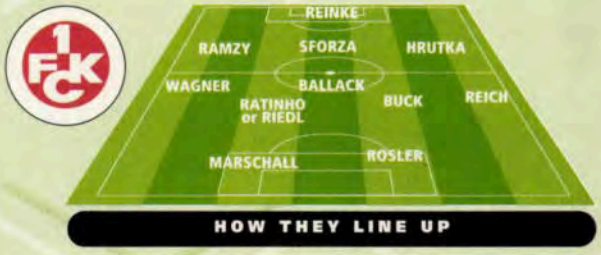
BAYERN MUNICH



HOW THEY LINE UP

While many Bundesliga sides have dabbled in the transfer market during the mid-season interlude, Bayern have understandably made no attempt to bring in new faces. Why would they when they have an eight-point cushion at the top of the table? But true to form, the club known as FC Hollywood has maintained its reputation as a collection of massive egos, with general manager Uli Hoeness and veteran Lothar Matthaus again clashing, Giovane Elber talking about moving to Spain and Mario Basler making waves as only he can. Bayern's major injury worries concern Thomas Strunz (ankle) and Mehmet Scholl (knee and Achilles tendon).

KAISERSLAUTERN



HOW THEY LINE UP

Like Bayern, Kaiserslautern have made no new signings during the winter break. Rehhagel was more than satisfied with his team's third place at the mid-point of the season. Moreover, he has never been one for wide-ranging recruitment drives; he prefers to get the most out of the players at his disposal and says he has full confidence in youngsters like Ballack, Ojigwe, Reich and Riedl. The most significant change in the club's line-up this season has been the switching of Ciri Sforza from central midfield to libero, a role the *Lauterer* skipper has played for Switzerland and Grasshopper Zurich – and so far it has worked out well.

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WORLD SOCCER

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Mallorca make their case

Jeff King on the European debutants with defensive depth

Dominating presence...Mallorca keeper Carlos Roa

MICHAEL ROBINSON, former Liverpool centre-forward and now front-man for Spain's Canal Plus football coverage, says: "The Spanish League is full of stars, but there's a definite lack of teams. Real Madrid and Barcelona, for example, are clearly much less than the sum of their parts. As for Mallorca; now that's what you call a football TEAM."

Last season, newly-promoted Mallorca were rightly hailed as Spain's surprise package. A fifth-place finish was the club's best ever, and they stretched Barcelona to a penalty shoot-out in the Spanish Cup Final.

There comes a stage, however, when talk of passing fads becomes redundant. Defeating Barça in both legs of August's Spanish Super Cup produced Mallorca's first major trophy *and* a statement of intent for 98-99: by Christmas, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid had all fallen at Lluis Sitjar stadium as Palma's finest set the pace in the League.

As for inferiority complexes, a hypothetical League table for 1998 left Mallorca top, nine points ahead of Barça and 16 clear of European champions Madrid.

Mallorca's start to this season was astonishing given that last year's team was raided by cheque-wielding heavyweights during the summer. Valeron and Mena (both to Atletico Madrid), Amato (Rangers), Ivan Campo (Real Madrid), Romero (Deportivo) and Esquerro (Athletic Bilbao) all went; all had been recruited by incoming Argentinian coach Hector Cuper a year earlier.

The 13 replacements included Real Madrid reject Dani, Atletico Madrid reject Biagini, Sevilla reject Lauren (via Second Division wooden-spooners Levante), 34-year-old Miquel Soler (seven clubs and counting), and the unfancied Argentinians Siviero, Ibagaza and 'Chupa' Lopez. Like current Mallorca goalkeeper Carlos Roa and the departed Oscar Mena before them, the latter trio all played for Lanus, Cuper's club back home.

And what did the 43-year-old coach-cum-magician make of all this? An even more competitive side, that's what. And did we mention a £7million profit?

Mallorca's success is based on Spain's most miserly defence. As the season approached its halfway point, the team were top of the table despite having scored just 18 goals in 17 games. But only eight goals conceded and nine clean sheets meant that Mallorca regularly picked up three points by scoring a single goal. Not until Roa's 24th League and Cup game of the season – a 4-2 defeat by Celta – did he concede more than one goal in 90 minutes. Predictably, only three against in the four games versus Hearts and Genk eased European debutants Mallorca into the Cup-winners Cup quarter-finals, too.

A back four of Olaizola, Marcelino, Siviero and Soler, plus tireless midfielders Lauren and Engonga, form a near-unbreachable wall in front of Roa, but it is the 29-year-old Argentina No 1 who has been grabbing most of the plaudits. He dominates his goal in a manner reminiscent of Jose Luis Chilavert, minus the eccentricities, and Manchester United, among others, are impressed. But for the moment, the man Argentinians call "the Lettuce" – he's a vegetarian – insists he'll be around until his contract finishes in 2001.

Roa says: "I'm not conceding many, but that's down to the whole team's hard graft. We're a disciplined side, working hard defensively all over the pitch, and the clean sheets are not down to one player. The key word is solidarity. We take our chances and then run, run and run some more to defend our lead. As Engonga always says in the dressing-room, 'Nobody beats us at running.'

"We know that if we give less than 100 per cent we'll fall flat on our faces. That – and keeping a low profile off the pitch – is our secret. After all, this is just starting."

Given Mallorca's exploits over the past year or so, those are ominous words for opponents.

NOTES AND QUOTES

UEFA CUP

ATLETICO MADRID v ROMA

These are not the best of times at Atletico Madrid. Corruption charges hang over club president Jesus Gil, star Brazilian midfielder Juninho has been shown the door by coach Arrigo Sacchi, and apart from a 1-0 win at Barcelona, the team has struggled away from home in the Spanish League.

Roma are not in the rudest of health, either, having slipped back in their Serie A challenge in recent weeks. Former Italy and Milan boss Sacchi may have inside knowledge of the opposition, but will it be sufficient to keep out a Roma side spearheaded by outstanding goalscorers Marco Delvecchio and Francesco Totti?

Jose Chamot, Atletico Madrid
"As an ex-Lazio man, this is a wonderful tie for me. It would be great to put Roma out of the UEFA Cup. This is going to be a very evenly-matched contest, with the smallest of details deciding who goes through."

Francesco Totti, Roma
"We've not been at our best in Europe this season, but now we're at the quarter-final stage, we must put in the performances or be knocked out. We have the players to win the UEFA Cup. Now we need five high-level team displays to achieve our goal."

BORDEAUX v PARMA

Bordeaux are having an excellent 98-99, showing great resilience in hanging on to the coat-tails of French League leaders Marseille. For them, everything depends on the creative platform formed by Micoud and Benarbia and the in-form strikers Laslandes and Wiltord.

After a shaky start to the season, Parma have moved ominously into the upper reaches of the Italian top flight. They are packed with class acts like Thuram, Cannavaro, Veron, Crespo and Chiesa, and, naturally, are the UEFA Cup's hot favourites.

Ali Benarbia, Bordeaux
"European ties don't come any tougher than this. Parma have fantastic players in every position and on the bench as well, but we have a lot of talent of our own. I've already told my old Monaco team-mate Lilian Thuram that he's going to have some free time when the semis come around."

Alain Boghossian, Parma
"I'm confident of going through, but we'll have to be at our best. No question, Bordeaux are an excellent all-round team: solid defence, lots of flair in midfield, and Wiltord and Laslandes are in a goalscoring groove. Being favourites doesn't mean a thing. If we don't play to our potential and show less hunger than Bordeaux, we will be the casualties."

BOLOGNA v LYON

Lyon have had mixed fortunes against Italian UEFA Cup opposition recently, knocking out Lazio in 95-96 and falling to Inter last season. But with playmaker Dhorasoo and attacker Caveglia in fine form, hopes are high they can make it two wins out of three.

The youthful Lyon line-up contrasts sharply with the old hands of Bologna. Key men are striker Beppe Signori, his towering partner Kennet Andersson and Davide Fontolan, a driving presence in midfield.

Compiled by Nick Bidwell

Giancarlo Marocchi, Bologna
"We could have had a far worse draw. I'd rather play Lyon than Parma, Roma or Celta Vigo, who look very good at the moment. We have every reason to be optimistic of making progress. Our team is playing very well right now and up front, Beppe Signori and Kennet Andersson are an excellent partnership."

Bernard Lacombe, Lyon coach
"What reassures me before playing Bologna is the thought that my team knows how to raise their game for big matches. The better the opposition, the better we play. Monaco, Bordeaux and Marseille have all been beaten by us this season, and in Europe we have looked impressive too. It seems to me Italian club sides look upon French teams as easy meat. I would like to change the attitude of our neighbours."

MARSEILLE v CELTA VIGO

Arguably the tie of the round, with the French League leaders up against European football's flavour of the month. Top of Marseille's agenda should be the shutting down of the Vigo midfield quartet of Mostovoi, Karpin, Makelele (an ex-Marseille player) and Mazinho; the Spaniards will have their hands full contending with OM's potent strikeforce of Ravanelli, Pires and Dugarry.

Robert Pires, Marseille
"Celta have been playing some of the best football in Europe this season, and it's sure to be a very open tie. Success in Europe is so important to this club and its supporters and we will be striving to give them what they so badly want."

Victor Fernandez, Celta Vigo coach
"There's a lot of hype surrounding our team. But we haven't won anything yet and have to keep our feet on the ground. Marseille are the best team in the land of the world champions and so deserve much respect."

Ties to be played on March 2 and 16

Oozing confidence...Alain Boghossian of Parma

CUP-WINNERS CUP

LAZIO v PANIONIOS

Only one possible outcome here – a Lazio victory. Seven Serie A wins in a row have put the Romans back in the Italian title frame, and Mancini, Vieri, Salas and company should logically find a mid-table Greek team to be a most attractive proposition.

Athens club Panionios will be counting on their Anglo-Irish connection: their manager, former Liverpool and Republic of Ireland international Ronnie Whelan, and strikers Garry Haylock (ex-Huddersfield) and Mark Robins (ex-Manchester United, Norwich and Leicester).

Sven-Goran Eriksson, Lazio coach
"I will not need to warn the players of the dangers of complacency. In both previous rounds, we've had our difficulties against supposedly inferior opposition, only beating Lausanne on the away goals rule and being held at home by Partizan Belgrade. It's true Lazio are playing much better now than they were in the autumn, but we cannot take anything for granted."

Mark Robins, Panionios
"The last time I had a really big game in Europe was when I was playing for Norwich against Bayern Munich at the Olympic Stadium in 1993. That time, I was carried off with a bad knee injury early in the match, so let's hope I have more luck in the Lazio games. Of course, the odds are against us. But we'll give the Italians a fright or two."

VARTEKS v MALLORCA

Despite the presence of highly talented goalscorer Miljenko Mumiek, Croatian outfit Varteks are likely to find surprise Spanish title-chasers Mallorca too hot to handle. Varteks' rearguard is not the most watertight and could suffer at the hands of an incisive Mallorca attack led by striker Dani and ably backed up by the likes of Lopez, Biagini and Paunovic.

Miljenko Mumiek, Varteks
"In two games anything can happen. Just because we are an unknown quantity in Europe, it doesn't follow that we have no chance. Croatia is a great football country and I'm sure we have several men here with the potential to go on to become prominent players in the top leagues in Europe."

Hector Cuper, Mallorca coach
"The season is going better for us than anyone could have predicted. We have surprised many by making a solid challenge for the Spanish title and, with respect to the Croatians, I expect a serious and applied Mallorca to take its place in the semi-finals."

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW v MACCABI HAIFA

Haifa are the first Israeli side to reach the quarter-finals of a European club competition, and they underlined their credentials by knocking out mighty Paris Saint-Germain in the first round. But while they can boast the exciting teenage midfielders Yossi Benayoun and Yaniv Katan in their line-up, they are bound to miss prolific striker Alon Mizrahi, recently transferred to Nice.

Lokomotiv start the tie as slight favourites thanks to the ability and experience of the spine of their side – the influential trio of sweeper Igor Chugainov, playmaker Yevgeni Kharlachev and striker Yuri Bulykin.

Le Saux far, so good...Chelsea's Graeme

Yevgeni Kharlachev, Lokomotiv Moscow
"I'm dreaming of a Lokomotiv-Lazio Final and don't see why it can't come true. I'm certain the Israelis are a good side. A number of Russians have played for them over the years and they have all said good things about them. But we are a better team and will prove it."

Yossi Benayoun, Maccabi Haifa
"Our victory against Paris Saint-Germain opened all of our eyes as to what we are capable of. I just hope our adventure in Europe carries on for a few more games yet. Winning European games is the best feeling ever."

CHELSEA v VALERENGA

Riding high in the English Premiership, Cup-winners Cup holders Chelsea would appear to have far too many weapons for the Oslo club, who recently suffered a hefty blow when keeper Tore Krogstad was ruled out for several months with a back complaint. But it will not be a free ride for the Londoners. Injuries to Casiraghi, Flo and Poyet have substantially reduced their attacking options and with meticulous former Norway boss Egil Olsen at the Valerenga helm (*see team focus page 39*), there are certain to be a few traps lying in wait for Gianluca Vialli and his boys.

Graeme Le Saux, Chelsea
"It's a decent draw. We've already beaten two other Scandinavian sides in Europe this season (Helsingborgs and FC Copenhagen) and making it a hat-trick is well within us. It will be a very competitive tie, though. We know we face a battle."

Egil Olsen, Valerenga coach
"We have already achieved much more than anyone expected by getting to the last eight. Chelsea are an exceptional team; they have many individual players of the highest calibre. But we have the collective strength to worry them."

Ties to be played on March 4 and 18

Inter's versatile World Cup-winner talks to Dominique Antognoni

WORLD SOCCER: How do you feel these days?
YOURI DJORKAEFF: Happy and relaxed because of the fantastic delight I feel after winning the World Cup. That had been my dream since I was a kid.

Has that success changed you?
Yes, I think as a person I am more relaxed and confident after such an achievement. Then, in training, when I try something and it comes off, my team-mates all say: "Well, what do you expect – he's a world champion." From a professional point of view I think I've changed because my will to win is even greater than it was before.

Why? How is that possible?
We play football with the aim of improving all the time and winning. I haven't won all that many competitions. I've never won a League title or the Champions League, for instance. This year, of course, I hope to win both with Inter. Then I'll be aiming for the European Championship in 18 months' time.

Will you really win the Italian League?
I'm certain. We have far better players than anyone else. Also, our new coach, Mircea Lucescu, is right on top of the job. We felt it right from the very first training session.

Can you explain that?
With Gigi Simoni, all our game was based on our individual efforts. The ball was moved forward and then it was up to me, or Moriero, or Zamorano, or Ronaldo to create some miracle. Now it's very different. We move the ball around between us much more, we do more work off the ball to create more space for ourselves and for our team-mates. Now even the defenders can attack. Under Simoni it was as if the forwards were on their own. Not any more. Everyone can join in. Before, when we weren't so well organised,

YOURI DJORKAEFF – LIFE AND TIMES

Early days...Djorkaeff in Monaco's colours

Hungry for more

it was easy for opponents to shut us down just by weight of numbers. Not any more.

Do you regret the fact that Lucescu will leave at the end of the season?
That's not certain. We have great faith in him. He understands a lot about football. He's very passionate about the game. It would be a backward step to let him go.

But isn't Lippi coming from Juventus?
Right now, Lucescu is the coach of Inter and that's all that matters.

Is it true that Ronaldo, Baggio and you have yet to play together?
That's right. At the start of the season, Roby [Baggio] and Ronnie [Ronaldo] had fitness problems, but in training we looked pretty good. The trio we have used most often has been Baggio, Ronaldo and Zamorano, and the system looks good. Look what happened in the last 20 minutes against Roma [Inter scored three times to make it 4-1]; our play was both effective and spectacular to watch.

But Baggio plays in your position. Has he got to go for you to play?
I don't mind what role I take, it's all for the good of the team and the club. I'd walk around the world if they asked me – that's how much I care for this club.

Simoni used you in attack, in a position that wasn't really yours. You have to do a lot of work but without getting in many goalscoring positions. What has been going on?
I can play in midfield or in attack. Well, not in attack the way Zamorano does, for example, but I can play up there. Lucescu says he will play me in whichever position he needs me. If he's happy, then I'm happy. What matters is winning.

Obviously your coach at the World Cup, Aime Jacquet, appreciated your abilities – saying that your work made the team shine. But don't you sometimes feel under-rated? Wouldn't you like to shine more, score more goals?
There's no point having a great game yourself if the team lose. If I'd had a wonderful World Cup from a personal point of view but we had lost the Final, what would have been the use? I've always known and accepted what sort of player I am. Maybe the fans don't always understand, so it's good when my role is acknowledged.

So why did France win the World Cup?
Because we were the best team and had a greater hunger to win than anyone else. We deserved it. We had the best players, we controlled our games, we never let the opposition get on top of us and we were able to vary our tactics a lot during a game. Sometimes we played with two forwards, sometimes with one, sometimes with four.

Will there be many changes now in the French team? Will Roger Lemerre have to find a new hungry generation?
Why? Just because we won the World Cup doesn't mean we want to stop. Those of us who are over 30 – like Blanc, Desailly, Leboeuf, myself – we want to go on playing and winning. It's too good to give up. Besides, we've worked hard to get team spirit and morale to the present level. Of course we must look to the future, but there are no problems on that score. Look at the young players coming through: Vieira, Henry, Trezeguet, Anelka – then, with me at Inter we have Dabo, Silvestre, Frey and Camara. French football is on a high.

Returning to Italian football – why is the title race so open this season?
In my opinion it's because all the top teams possess the sort of great creative and attacking players who can win games. Fiorentina have a terrific attack – Batistuta and Edmundo will score 50 goals between them – but they won't win the title. They lack experience, even if they have a coach in Trapattoni who has done it all. Parma are very strong and they've made some terrific buys. They're one of the favourites. Lazio have suddenly started to play as well as they did last season, if not better. They have some exceptional individuals, but lack something – I'm not sure what – which makes the difference between the champions and the rest.

What of Inter's chances?
We had a lot of fitness problems at the start of the season. I think it all started with the Champions League defeat by Real Madrid in Seville. The game was too early in the season and we weren't ready. All the players on which Simoni had relied – Baggio apart – were below their best. That meant we went into action without our best weapon, our ability to hit on the break, being effective enough. We had some unfortunate results but we never doubted our ability. Now the crisis is past and we are in condition to win the League again.

What will decide the championship?
Patience and experience will be the most important qualities. That's why I believe we are favourites.

You have to play Manchester United in the Champions League. Does that worry you?
No, but we respect them – their tradition, their way of playing, their power and strength. Their play is typically British, but mixed up with an almost Latin technique. But I think we will surprise them at Old Trafford on the counter-attack. That's where and how the tie will be won.

Then will you go on to win the Champions League itself?
Of course. The winning team will be the one with the greatest hunger. Us.

March 9, 1968 Born in Lyon
1984-85 Makes first-team debut for Grenoble in French Second Division.
August 1989 Moves to Strasbourg, also in the Second Division, scoring 21 goals in 28 League games that season.
November 1990 Joins First Division Monaco.
June 1991 Wins French Cup, beating Marseille 1-0 in the Final.
May 1992 Comes on as substitute in the Cup-winners Cup Final but Monaco lose 2-0 to Werder Bremen.
October 1993 Makes international debut in France's 3-2 World Cup qualifying defeat by Israel.
1994 Finishes season as French First Division's joint top scorer, with 20 goals.

Cup winner...with Paris Saint-Germain

Summer 1995 Joins Paris Saint-Germain.
May 1996 Wins Cup-winners Cup as PSG overcome Rapid Vienna 1-0 in Brussels.
June 1996 Part of French squad that reaches the European Championship semi-finals.
Summer 1996 Joins Internazionale.
May 1997 Reaches the UEFA Cup Final with Inter, but they lose on penalties to Schalke.
May 1998 Goes one better as Inter overpower Lazio 3-0 in the Final of the same competition.
July 1998 Member of first France side to lift the World Cup. Plays in all but one of the games in the finals, scoring against Denmark in the group stage.

Counter-attacker...in action for Inter

It's deefeerent these days

Jeff King looks at Camacho's new breed

Gaining experience...Salgado takes on Inzaghi of Italy

"ESPAIN ees deefeerent," the Spanish are fond of saying – in deliberately bad English – as a way of celebrating their country's idiosyncrasies. When it comes to football coaches who defy logic at every turn, however, most Spaniards would settle for a little less eccentricity.

Happily then, Jose Camacho's Spain promises to be very 'deefeerent' from Javier Clemente's. Different, but more logical.

Both men coached Espanyol immediately before brief spells working in Madrid – Camacho's 1998 reign at Real lasted 20 days, while Clemente managed seven months at Atletico in 1989. There, however, similarities end.

When Clemente's turbulent spell in charge of the national team ended after six years and one humiliating defeat in Cyprus, the country breathed a palpable sigh of relief. Even the man himself admitted, "The bad boy in this film is going."

Where Clemente, a pugnacious Basque, thrives on a diet of feuding and friction, Camacho is an all-round nice guy who avoids all off-field scraps unless a principle is at stake. He is a former Real Madrid icon and when he returned to his old club last June, as coach, it promised to be a marriage made in heaven. But when Madrid's president, Lorenzo Sanz, slighted Camacho's coaching lieutenants, the prodigal son walked out without hesitation.

As befits a man whose performances on the left of Madrid's defence were characterised by uncommon commitment – the British tabloids dubbed him 'Macho' Camacho in his 1980s heyday – Spain's new coach screams himself hoarse through every 90 minutes on the bench. Away from the action, however, he has no time for energy-sapping polemics.

"I'm a serious guy," says Camacho, a 43-year-old native of a village in Murcia, south-eastern Spain. "I don't cry when I lose and I don't laugh at opponents when I win. Football is a game and you've got to accept whatever comes your way."

Where Clemente was a member of the masonic 'you're either one of the game's inner circle or you're clueless' school, Camacho is happy to talk football. After Spain's draw against Italy in November he refused to praise individuals, insisting "football is a collective game". And he added, with no hint of irony, "I'll leave you good journalists to rate players individually."

Camacho won 81 caps and amassed nine League titles in 16 years at Real Madrid, but he even gets along with Barça people. "Everybody defends their own colours," he insists, "but competition should always be based on mutual respect. That's why I get on well with Johan Cruyff, because we've always respected each other. First as players [the Dutchman's battles with the fiery young Camacho in the 1970s are legend] and then as coaches."

If Clemente's latter years were characterised by clannish rites, Camacho is a coach who believes in doing the logical thing; if that means picking in-form players and playing them in their natural position, so be it. His predecessor's insistence on sticking with past-their-sell-by-date players – most notably Basque chums Andoni Zubizarreta and Julio Salinas – was remarkable, while the likes of Canizares, Pizzi, Nadal and Ferrer remained squad regulars even when out of favour at their clubs.

Clemente's deployment of strapping centre-halves (Hierro, Rios, Nadal) as midfield pivots or strikers (Raul, Kiko, Alfonso) as playmakers was equally bemusing. Not surprisingly, Camacho's first selection, for September's 1-1 draw against Russia, included debuts for four examples of a previously endangered species: Alkiza, Engonga, De Pedro and Ito are all natural midfielders, and all were playing in their rightful position.

None of these names rolls off the tongue – Vicente Engonga, Camacho's first midfield general, is 33 and must have abandoned hope of international honours – but all were in sparkling form for their clubs.

"I'll never pick anybody on reputation," says Camacho. "Players will be picked on current form." The coach stuck to his guns for October's Euro 2000 qualifier in Israel – a make-or-break game after the 3-2 defeat in Cyprus – and a midfield axis of Alkiza, Engonga and De Pedro guided Spain to a 2-1 victory.

Camacho's penchant for form players was in evidence against Italy, too. Not in their wildest dreams did Mallorca fans think they would ever see three of their men in the same Spain line-up, but it's their team who have made the early running in the League, so centre-half Marcelino and centre-forward Dani came in to join Engonga.

Likewise, Celta, Spain's other early pacemakers, provided full-back Salgado and centre-forward Sanchez.

Clemente's obsession with the old guard might have fooled you into thinking there were no talented youngsters in Spain. Try telling Camacho that. After a lacklustre start in Salerno, the coach handed the midfield reins to 23-year-old debutants Valeron and Helguera; both were outstanding as Spain outplayed an experienced Italian side in the second half, coming from behind to earn a 2-2 draw.

Camacho's more democratic instincts have signalled an end to the days when Spain's squad consisted of a dozen or more Real Madrid/Barcelona stars plus a couple of 'outsiders' to make up the numbers. Against Italy, only Sergi, captaining his country for the first time, and young veteran Raul represented Spain's big two.

"There aren't many Spanish first-teamers at Madrid and Barça – in our last meeting there were only five," argues Raul. "Camacho has more to choose from at clubs like Athletic Bilbao, where all the players are Spanish." True enough, but that never stopped Clemente from filling his squad with bench-warmers from Bernabeu and Camp Nou.

Camacho's attempts to breathe new life into the Spain team have been 'helped' by injuries to the likes of Hierro, Alfonso, Luis Enrique, Kiko and Guardiola, players he admits will be back in contention when fit. But unlike in the past, these guys cannot expect a second invitation if they fail to perform.

In the long run, Camacho knows he will be judged by results, but after the debilitating sectarianism of the Clemente years, he is guaranteed an extended honeymoon.

That the country is behind 'Jose' was clear when the TV audience for his debut against Russia – a friendly, remember – tripled that for the Euro 2000 qualifier against Cyprus. Spain obviously expects. And Camacho is a man who tends to deliver.

In a country where so many coaches shoot from the lip, that is 'deefeerent'.

GOALKEEPERS

Jose Santiago CANIZARES
18.12.69. Valencia. 14 caps.
Now established as the number one after years as understudy to Zubizarreta. Moved to Valencia last summer following four seasons at Real Madrid where he was rarely first-choice. Made a dramatic debut for Spain in November 1993, as a substitute after Zubi had been sent off.

Antonio Jimenez Sistachs, TONI
12.10.70. Espanyol. 1 cap.
Made his debut as a late substitute for Canizares against Italy last November. A solid performer at Espanyol since 1993.

DEFENDERS

MICHEL SALGADO
22.10.75. Celta Vigo. 3 caps.
Swashbuckling right-back, former Under-21 star and one of the impressive performers in Celta's 98-99 UEFA Cup campaign. Man of the match against Italy in November after making debut in Clemente's last game. Tipped for move to Real Madrid.

Rafael ALKORTA
16.9.68. Athletic Bilbao. 54 caps.
Returned to Bilbao in 1997 after three successful campaigns at Real Madrid. Quick but impetuous and a likely starter in central defence.

SERGI Barjuan Eclusa
28.12.71. Barcelona. 39 caps (1 gl).
Diminutive but highly able left-back. Loves to use his pace to attack, but also a highly competent defender. Captain against Italy.

Fernando HIERRO
23.3.68. Real Madrid. 61 caps (18 gls).
Commanding centre-back who was used by Clemente as a central midfield pivot. Camacho has restored him to his familiar club role in central defence.

New boss...Camacho (left)

Carlos AGUILERA
22.5.69. Atletico Madrid. 7 caps.
Former winger and latecomer to international football who faces stiff competition from Michel Salgado for the right-back slot. Better as a wing-back than full-back.

Francisco Jemez Martin, PACO
18.4.70. Zaragoza. 2 caps.
Strong centre-back, born in the Canary Islands and signed by Zaragoza from Deportivo last summer after spells with Cordoba and Vallecano. Debut against Russia.

MARCELINO Elena Sierra
26.9.71. Mallorca. 1 cap.
Rugged centre-back who made his debut against Italy last November.

MIDFIELDERS

LUIS ENRIQUE Martinez
8.5.70. Barcelona. 41 caps (8 gls).
Hugely talented performer who plays everywhere from full-back to centre-forward at Barça. Injuries have restricted his availability to Camacho this season.

Vicente ENGONGA Mate
20.10.65. Mallorca. 3 caps.
Made the late, late transition from journeyman midfielder (Valladolid, Celta Vigo, Valencia, Mallorca) to international honours when he anchored Spain's midfield against Russia last September.

Jordi LARDIN Cruz
4.6.73. Atletico Madrid. 3 caps.
Former Under-21 star who joined Atletico in the summer of 1997 after breaking through at Espanyol under Camacho. Appeared as a late substitute in Camacho's first game in charge, against Russia.

Antonio Alvarez Perez, ITO
21.1.75. Betis Sevilla. 1 cap.
A surprise selection by Camacho who made a late (and so far his only) appearance against Russia. A rapid rise from being the Spanish League's lowest paid player 18 months ago while with Extremadura.

Francisco Javier DE PEDRO
4.8.73. Real Sociedad. 3 caps (1 gl).
Another natural midfielder who has benefited from Camacho's belief that if you're in form, you're in.

Bitor ALKIZA Fernandez
26.10.70. Athletic Bilbao. 3 caps (1 gl).
Basque-born midfielder and another beneficiary of Camacho's preference for ball-playing midfielders. Fast becoming a hero at Bilbao after starting out at rivals Sociedad.

Late starter...Vicente Engonga won his first cap against Russia at the age of 32

Juan Carlos VALERON Santana
17.6.75. Atletico Madrid. 1 cap.
Has risen to prominence this season after joining Atletico from Mallorca. Made international debut as second-half sub against Italy last November.

Ivan HELGUERA Bujia
28.3.75. Espanyol. 1 cap.
One of the success stories of the Spanish season, with leading clubs competing to prize him away from Espanyol. Another half-time debutant against Italy last November.

FORWARDS

Francisco KIKO Narvaez
26.4.72. Atletico Madrid. 26 caps (5 gls).
Andalusian-born forward with excellent control and vision. A noted creator for others rather than a finisher. Two-goal hero in the 1992 Olympic gold medal-winning side.

Joseba ETXEBERRIA
5.8.77. Athletic Bilbao. 11 caps (3 gls).
Chunky Basque youngster who scored on his debut against Romania 18 months ago. A battler who first came to prominence at the World Under-20 championships in Qatar in 1995.

Fernando MORIENTES
5.4.76. Real Madrid. 6 caps (7 gls).
A fairytale debut – two goals in the first five minutes against Sweden – in the build-up to France 98. Expected to renew his club partnership with Raul under Camacho.

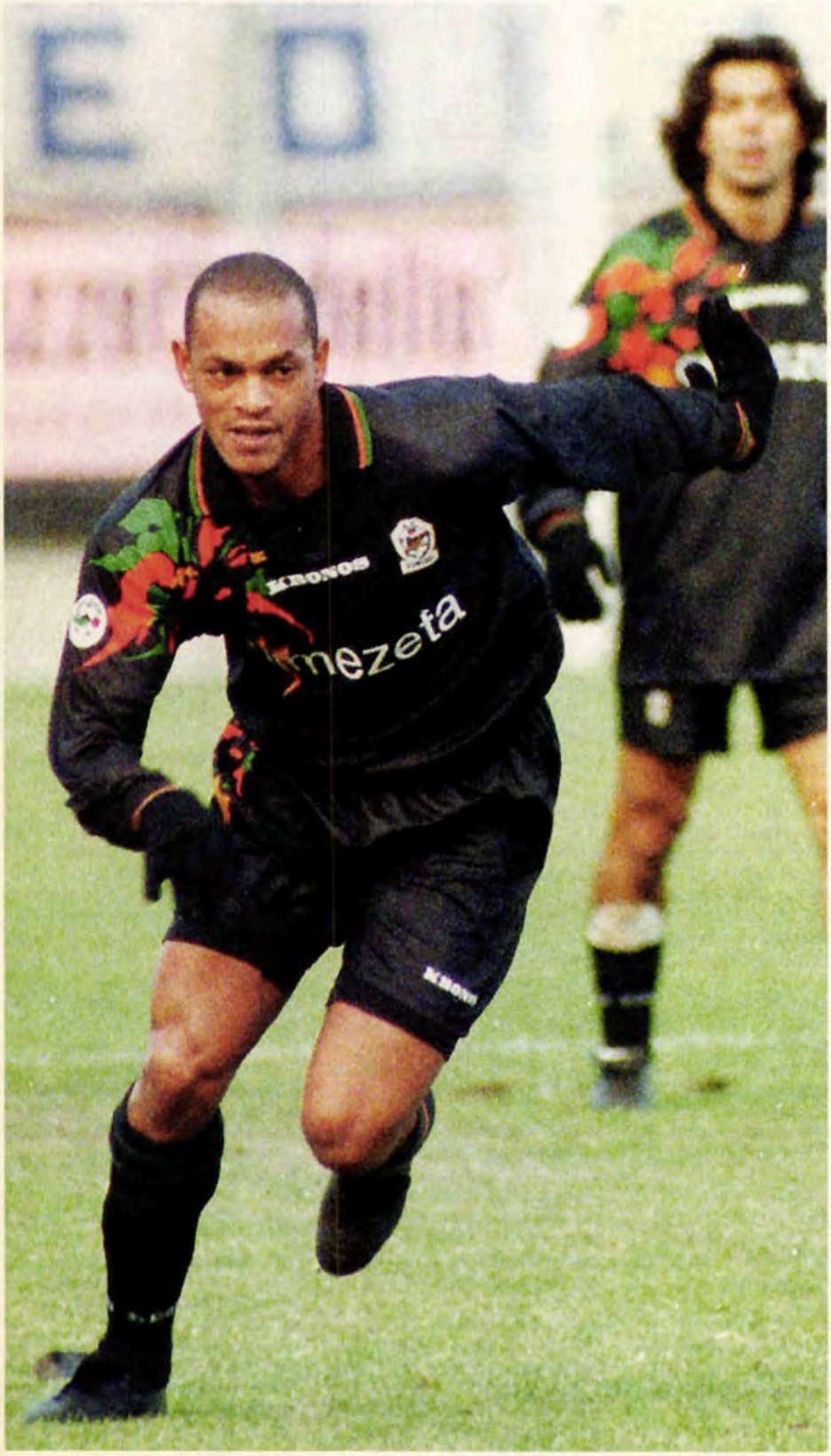
RAUL Gonzalez Blanco
27.6.77. Real Madrid. 20 caps (5 gls).
The boy wonder looks set to play a vital role under Camacho. Now 21, Raul is returning to form after a goalless three months at the start of last year provoked the first backlash since his explosion on the Spanish League scene as a 17-year-old in the autumn of 1994.

Daniel Garcia Lara, DANI
22.12.74. Mallorca. 1 cap.
Real Madrid reject who has been revitalised at Mallorca this season and earned an international debut against Italy.

Juan Gimes SANCHEZ Moreno
15.5.72. Celta Vigo. 1 cap.
Impressive performances for Celta resulted in a debut cap against Italy last November.

The goal they didn't want

Paddy Agnew on a curious case in Venice



Going against orders?...Tuta has alleged that a team-mate told him not to try to score against Bari

NEWLY-PROMOTED Venezia, back in Serie A after a 32-year absence, have rarely made this season's headlines, but became front-page items for the worst possible reason – their involvement in match-fixing allegations.

Until the last week of January, Venezia had spent most of the season in relative obscurity, caught up in an inevitably difficult battle while anchored to the bottom of the table.

After their 2-1 home win against Bari, however, they suddenly found themselves centre stage and in the spotlight following allegations from their Brazilian striker, Tuta, scorer of the 90th-minute winning goal. He claimed that he had been instructed by a team-mate not to try to score but rather to settle for the draw.

The win against Bari had come at the end of a week which had seen Venezia draw with champions Juventus and record a victory against Empoli – seven points in all, which lifted them out of the relegation zone.

Tuta's late goal might have been expected to prompt celebrations from his colleagues in a side seemingly destined for a speedy return to Serie B, but finally beginning to suggest that Serie A survival might be a realistic possibility, after all. But photographic and video evidence suggests that the goal was less than warmly welcomed by Tuta's team-mates. One shot widely publicised shows two Venezia players standing hands on hips, looking disconsolate, just after the goal went in. Celebrations were somewhat subdued, with only Tuta's compatriot, Bilica, rushing over to congratulate him.

All of this might not have prompted further comment except for the fact that the day after the match Tuta unleashed a bombshell when telling reporters that at least one Venezia player, striker Filippo Maniero, had told him not to score.

Tuta, bought from Atletico Paranaense last October, had gone on as a 77th-minute substitute when the score was 1-1. "I scored the winning goal and yet everybody, not just the Bari players, got angry with me," he told Rome daily *La Repubblica*. "In my country you always go looking for a win, yet here my team-mates were happy to settle for a 1-1 draw...it was not difficult to understand this because Maniero had told me as soon as I came on the field that I was not to score, that it would be better if the game finished 1-1."

Inevitably, the Italian Federation's Investigations Office immediately moved into action, promising to conclude its inquiry as quickly as possible. Inevitably, too, Italian parliamentarians got involved in the act, with Senator Michele Bonatesta and Deputy Roberto Manzione asking questions in both the Upper and Lower Italian chambers.

Given that Venezia v Bari featured on the Totocalcio Schedina (pools), it is highly probable that the Italian state judiciary (probably the state prosecutor's office in Venice) will also look into the matter.

However, the whole affair may be destined to blow over. A pre-match plot to 'fix' a draw is one thing, but an on-field situation where two sides settle for a draw after having battled to win for most of the 90 minutes is another.

Tuta's sense of outrage may have been prompted more by his anger with his team's willingness to settle for a draw than by any sense of a pre-match plot. As he said repeatedly, in Brazil you always go looking for a win, even in stoppage time. Nor does it help matters that he reportedly enjoys less than intimate relations with many of his team.

Tuta said: "It's crazy that nobody congratulates you after a winning goal but I thought it was just because, at

Breathtaking...Fiorentina's Edmundo

the moment, I am not getting on well with my team-mates and my coach [Walter Novellino]. They're a little bit racist" – adding just a little high-octane petrol to the fire.

Whatever the outcome, the precedents do not augur well for either Venezia or Bari. Earlier this season, Empoli were penalised two points after an alleged match-fixing attempt before their away match with Sampdoria.

On that occasion Lorenzo Repetta, a businessman with no connections to Empoli, allegedly approached referee Stefano Farina and asked him to 'help' the club. Although Empoli denied all involvement in the affair they still lost two points, despite taking the case to the Federation's Appeals Committee. The match, by the way, resulted in a 3-0 home win for Sampdoria.

On the purely footballing front, the pre-Christmas trends in the title contest have been emphatically underlined. Lazio claimed two important scalps in successive games when beating leaders Fiorentina 2-0 at home and Parma 3-1 away to not only consolidate a winning run but to strike important psychological blows against the two sides who, at this stage, look to be their most serious championship rivals.

While both the Milan sides will have their say in championship doings between now and May, Fiorentina, Parma and Lazio look to be the most fully equipped and, perhaps more important, the 'hungriest' teams in Serie A this term.

Edmundo, Batistuta and Rui Costa at Fiorentina; Vieri, Salas and Mancini at Lazio; Crespo, Chiesa and Veron at Parma – these look the three best front lines in Italy. Each side has potential title-winning cards to play.

Lazio have by far the strongest squad, with a subs' bench the envy of half of Europe (Spaniard Ivan De la Pena, Portuguese defender Manuel Couto, Croat striker Alen Boksic, Portuguese midfielder Sergio Conceicao, etc).

Parma have probably the greatest all-round strengths, while their defensive trio of Argentinian Nestor Sensini, Frenchman Lilian Thuram and Fabio Cannavaro is probably the best in Serie A.

Fiorentina have two huge factors in their favour – the title-winning drive of coach Giovanni Trapattoni and the spectacular skills of Edmundo and captain Gabriel Batistuta up front. While Trapattoni and Batistuta represent no surprise, the sheer breathtaking quality of the temperamental Edmundo represents a potential trump card.

All now seems set for a splendid second half to the season. Lazio and Parma have overcome indifferent starts and Fiorentina, too, have shown they can ride out the bad times, recovering from their defeat by Lazio with instant wins against Cagliari and Empoli. More importantly, Fiorentina's squad appear to have listened to the angry words of Trapattoni in the aftermath of the Lazio defeat. He called on them to stop squabbling among themselves and concentrate on their soccer.

The race is on in earnest and it's even money the field.

In with a shout...Crespo and Parma are among the favourites to win Serie A

Pro-file Fabio Junior Pereira

Striking prospect in Ronaldo mould

"I'M NOT Ronaldo," was the comment of £9.5million Brazilian striker Fabio Junior as he landed at Fiumicino airport to begin his spell with Roma. But the comparisons with the Inter star have been a constant feature in the life of Fabio Junior ever since his rapid rise to prominence with Cruzeiro. Five years after launching Ronaldo on to the world, Cruzeiro's attack was once more spearheaded by a tall, shaven-headed striker.

The Belo Horizonte club have enjoyed a wonderful season, reaching the finals of the national championship, the Brazilian Cup and the Mercosur Cup. Fabio Junior led the charge. After starring in a youth tournament last January, he broke through to the first team and ended 1998 acknowledged as the revelation of Brazil's year.

Tostao, the 1970 World Cup striker who used to play for Cruzeiro, was asked frequently last year to draw comparisons between Fabio Junior and Ronaldo. Initially he thought the shirt and the physical similarity were all they had in common. By the end of the year he was not so sure, saying: "The imagination of some of his recent play has led to a hope that he could be something special."

While Ronaldo began his European adventure with an apprenticeship in Holland with PSV, Fabio Junior has headed directly for the challenge of Italian football. He can expect a warm welcome from the club's Brazilian community (Aldair, Cafu, Paulo Sergio and Antonio Carlos Zago), but despite the size of the transfer fee, there is no guarantee of a first-team place – Totti and Delvecchio have been in such fine form that both have been called into the Italy squad.

The desire for a move from Brazil was doubtless strengthened by the farcical organisation that saw Cruzeiro play 48 games in five months. They finished the year a tired team and were beaten in all the finals they contested. Fabio Junior clearly had little left to give, and the prospect of so much work and so many fine performances for no return saw him leap at the chance to make his name in Europe.

While there was still some gas in the tank, Cruzeiro played some fine football, and Fabio Junior, a young man from a small town, clearly benefited from the presence in the side of two highly-experienced internationals. Valdo and Muller date back to the 1986 World Cup, but showed that they had lost none of their sparkle. Valdo, back in Brazil after a decade spent in Portugal, France and Japan, conducted the midfield with his short-passing, give-and-go game. Muller, veteran of three World Cups, was perhaps even more important in Fabio Junior's development, setting up many goals for his young strike partner.

Fabio Junior's approach play may never match Ronaldo's, but his vision and touch are developing and his speed is impressive for a big man. He is also a proficient finisher with both feet and in the air, and with his size and build he can be very difficult to stop. With such attributes, Fabio Junior is likely to put international defences to the test. His first game for Brazil came in October, against Ecuador, when he caught the eye as a second-half substitute.

In the future he could form Brazil's attack with Ronaldo – a dismal prospect for the world's commentators, an even worse one for its defenders.

Tim Vickery

Club Roma (Ita)
Country Brazil
Born November 20, 1977, in Manhuacu, Minas Gerais
Previous club Cruzeiro
International debut October 1998, v Ecuador
International caps 1 (0 goals)

Million upon million

Graham Turner on de cost of De Boer war

Twin arrivals...Ronald and Frank De Boer arrive at Barcelona airport after signing from Ajax

A SMALL MATTER of £13million put an end to De Boer war between Ajax and Barcelona, plus the small matter of £1.3m each for every season of a contract designed to keep Frank and Ronald at Camp Nou until June 2002.

This was the final move in a soap which, since last summer, had threatened to Boer the pants off all and sundry. Arbitration courts, lawyers and agents – plus sacked Ajax coach Morten Olsen – are now considerably shorter of work.

Just in case the twins get itchy boots again in the meantime, their buy-out clause has been fixed at 60m Euros which, my calculator insists, is slightly above tuppence ha'penny – about 45 million quid, in fact.

The terrible twins were registered just before the shutters came down on Spain's mid-season transfer window. Having flown in from South Africa, they were rushed off for a Copa del Rey tie against Division 2B strugglers Benidorm which threatened to end as a Boer draw until, in true Ron of the Rovers style, Frank's brother headed the only goal in the 88th minute.

Four days later, they made their League debuts with impressive, authoritative performances in the 3-1 win over Zaragoza which allowed Barcelona to take over top spot from Celta on goal difference at the halfway mark and thus claim the honorary title of Winter Champions. Honestly.

The last word has been added in an attempt to persuade incredulous readers of the previous issue that we're not kidding. Since then, Louis Van Gaal's side have won five on the bounce and moved up 11 places.

This represents a serious comment about a league where 18 points cover top to bottom, where eight points cover the top 12 and where the joint leaders, with 34 out of 57, have the lowest points total since the three-points-for-a-win system was introduced.

In other words, the situation left absolutely everything to play for in the second half of the season and the fact that crisis-stricken Van Gaal and his Merry Dutchmen were at the top served only to confuse the public at large.

The critics were equally confounded. Some decided to set their sights on the £80m which Louis has spent in a season and a half or the £195m which has gone in the transfer market since Josep Lluis Nunez took over the presidency.

Most, however, preferred to aim a 12-boer shotgun at the eight Dutch players and four Dutch coaches in the dressing-room.

Quality is not the question, especially since Philip Cocu – earlier labelled a pot-boiler – suddenly emerged as a tasty Cocu au vin and has contributed vintage goals to the Barça revival. The questions are political. Catalans are now a minority at the club regarded as a standard-bearer for Catalan national identity.

The president of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, commented on the Dutch connection. Van Gaal was criticised for snapping back: "Is Pujol in charge of this team?"

The arrival of the two Dutch brothers prompted the two Catalan brothers, Oscar and Roger Garcia, to request transfers because they could see no hope of first-team football.

Portuguese goalkeeper Vitor Baia, who had made outspoken comments about his chances of ousting Dutch rival Ruud Hesp, was loaned to his former club, FC Porto. Even Patrick Kluivert publicly admitted that the Dutch invasion would not make life a bowl of tulips.

"While we are winning," he pointed out, "the fans will be with us. If things go wrong, all the fingers will be pointed at us." The Catalans certainly are aghast at the prospect of a team based on eight Dutchmen, Rivaldo, Figo and the token Catalan presence of 'Pep' Guardiola.

Michael Reiziger's knee operation (two months out) and Winston Bogarde's lack of match fitness have postponed the conversion of fears into reality.

Jesus Gil also is waiting with bated breath to see whether fears will be converted into reality. Having been involved in 82 law suits since taking over at Atletico, it came as no great surprise when he was flung into the Costa del Sol's answer to Wormwood Scrubs, accused of forging documents and diverting Marbella ratepayers' dosh into Atletico Madrid's pocket.

Oddly, of the 11 lawsuits currently pending, this is the only one directly related to football. The others are based on accusations of commercial malpractice and, more especially, town planning infractions which have permitted lucrative property developments in Green Zone sectors of Marbella.

After Gil had been refused bail (for fear that he would destroy evidence) some fans slept outside the jail and when he decreed free entry to the League game against Extremadura, the match was converted into a gigantic, carefully orchestrated pro-Gil demonstration.

He was then taken to hospital suffering from heart murmurs and the judge, under pressure to decree a cell-by date, finally released him on £450,000 bail.

Gil has been playing with fire by painting huge grey areas between his roles as mayor of Marbella and president of Atletico, and the movements of funds from the Costa del Sol to Madrid were bound to arouse suspicion. He is now labouring mightily to elude the long arm of the law, and the consequences for the club could be drastic.

Coach Arrigo Sacchi, in the meantime, has been struggling to keep the squad's minds on the job in hand, and felt obliged to admit that the 4-2 defeat by Real in the Madrid derby was due, mostly, to lack of experience. He was not referring to the age of his players but rather making a comment on post-Bosman realities by admitting that his team of imports simply did not know how to cope with the special atmosphere during a derby at Bernabeu stadium. Hmmm...

But, for sheer indignation, Real president Lorenzo Sanz takes the biscuit. The 4-2 win over Atletico had various positive readings – not least the two goals scored by stressed striker Fernando Morientes. 'Moro' had rubbed his pregnant girlfriend's belly before the match, curiously associating her condition with his own failure to score. Four days later he hit another two in the Cup game against Villarreal and persuaded Guus Hiddink that he was worth the first-team place which had been denied him all season.

Real's next League fixture was away

to Deportivo, one of the many sides whose title chances could be described as hanging on in. In the background was the team's extremely poor record without the injured Fernando Hierro.

Fernando Redondo's absence had allowed Guti to produce some enthralling performances in the role of midfield anchor man, but his injury in training just before the departure for La Coruna left Hiddink with a headache – especially as Roberto Carlos and Robert Jarni had both issued public statements questioning his decision to employ the latter as a central defender in a three-man defence.

In Riazor, he opted to field four defenders in front of Bodo Illgner (who celebrated the three-year extension to his contract by shaving his hair off): Panucci, Ivan Campo, Sanchis and Roberto Carlos. So far so good. But he then opted to field Karembeu and Seedorf as midfield pivots behind four attackers – Raul, Mijatovic, Morientes and Suker.

Those of us who applaud attacking philosophies and risk-taking would have wanted his gamble to pay off. But it didn't.

While the pragmatism of Atletico's Arrigo Sacchi and Valencia's Claudio Ranieri was generating dividends against Celta and Mallorca, Hiddink got a hiding. Three goals in the first half and one in the second added up to his heaviest defeat since taking over.

The loss meant that, at the halfway mark, only the bottom two – Salamanca and Extremadura – had worse defensive records. Guus was gutted. His attack-minded, happy-go-lucky midfield had a Gruyère consistency, while the marking at the back can only be described as, er...generous.

The players were having a go at each other; Hiddink was having a go at the players; and, more significantly, Lorenzo Sanz had a right royal presidential go at all and sundry, claiming that Real had made fools of themselves.

Cue for speculation about Hiddink's future and for photos of Fabio Capello to be dusted off.

Sanz had made one signing in a bid to strengthen Real's suspect right wing: Yugoslav World Cup squad-member Perica Ognjenovic from Red Star Belgrade. The guy they call Atom Ant won one League and three Cups with Red Star, as well as eight international caps for Yugoslavia. He is now expected to give Christian Karembeu some severe competition. And he's not 22 until February 24.

Atom Ant and the De Boers were the major novelties during a mid-season transfer window which generated only modest activity, with as many loans as outright transfers and with more players in the departure lounge than in arrivals.

Prison protest...Atletico Madrid fans call for the release of club president Jesus Gil

Kresic carries the can

THERE has been major turbulence in Valladolid. They picked up three vital points by beating Betis 2-1 at home, only for the federation to award the points to the visitors and impose an administrative 0-3 scoreline.

The crime? The Valladolid manager, Sergio Kresic, forgot to review his post-Bosman squad's passports. When Jose Luis Santamaria was injured in the 18th minute, Kresic sent on Colombian Hugo Lozano, forgetting that Julio Cesar (Brazil), Juan Manuel Pena (Bolivia), Alen Peternac (Croatia) and Diego Klimowicz (Argentina) were providing his maximum quota of non-EU foreigners.

He took only six minutes to correct the situation by replacing Klimowicz with Frenchman Daniel Dutuel, but Betis coach Javier Clemente showed no mercy in lodging an appeal and successfully claiming the points. What's more, Kresic was banned for a month.

Valladolid fans, aware that similar cases involving Real Madrid and Valencia had been settled by a mere fine for the coach, took to the streets to protest against corruption.

There were protests of a more emotional kind when the draw for the Copa del Rey paired Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad – who had been drawn against each other in the UEFA Cup.

This raked through the ashes of grief which followed the murder of Real Sociedad fan Aitor Zabaleta at Vicente Calderon stadium. But maybe it's better to keep such atrocities fresh in the mind...

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Moving to Turin...Thierry Henry has signed for Juventus

Campora's crusade

Monaco president blames players as Tigana quits as coach. Andre Duclos reports

HAS PLAYER POWER gone too far? This is a question which is certainly not being asked in France alone, but it could scarcely have been put with more devastating force than by the president of Monaco, Jean-Louis Campora.

During the winter break, Campora comprehensively damned his players for their recalcitrant attitude, their lack of commitment to the colours. None more so than the two brightest young jewels in the Monaco crown, Thierry Henry and Daniel Trezeguet.

Both were members of the France World Cup squad, but both, according to an incensed Campora, had been giving far less than their all this season, each of them, in his view, virtually "playing to get away".

Henry has certainly got away now, having just moved to Juventus. In the case of Trezeguet, that gifted centre-forward, brought up in Argentinian soccer, it's been known most of the season that Roma are very interested, although Campora stresses that no official approach has been received from the Italian club.

The president cites a reprehensible episode when, at half-time of a match, in the Monaco dressing-room, while Monaco coach Jean Tigana tried to give his tactical talk, Trezeguet sat there insolently reading a newspaper.

As Campora emphasises, Trezeguet and Henry had Tigana to thank in large measure for their places in the international squad. You could scarcely blame the outraged Campora for threatening those players who were not giving of their best with the prospect of keeping them out of the first team and refusing to sell them. Though, as we know, few clubs can permit themselves such an indulgence.

Alas, Campora's intervention could not save Tigana, who resigned as coach after a 3-1 defeat by Bastia, and with Monaco lying seventh in the table. He was replaced by Claude Puel.

Unsurprisingly, Campora has engendered a good deal of sympathy among other club presidents, though Metz's Carlo Molinari emphasises that only a minority of players are behaving in this dissident way; otherwise, as he says, there would be chaos. But he cites the case of two ex-Metz attackers, Cyrille Pouget and more recently Bruno Rodriguez, who in his view "had left us inside his head for six months".

Gervais Martel of plucky Lens, who suffered crucial defections during last summer after so gallantly winning the League, points out that nowadays "players wear five or six shirts during their career", and puts much blame on greedy agents.

He looks back to a happier time when players would stay at Lens for 10 years, and cannot comprehend why today's players so quickly get itchy feet. He relates such a state of affairs to what is happening in society at large and does not see things getting any better.

Newly-promoted Lorient's president, Noel Couedel, says he does not know what kind of a reaction might result at Monaco after such harsh words by Campora; things are very different at Lorient. Players, he insists, are very attached to the club, the place and the manager. He can see certain negative attitudes even among his own players, but predicts improvement in the future. A true optimist.

At Paris Saint-Germain, another revolution, though hardly an unexpected one. During the winter hiatus Charles Bietry resigned, in a welter of self-recrimination. Yes, admitted the former star commentator of Canal Plus, who of course own the club, he made bad mistakes in the transfer market.

He did indeed spend in an almost profligate fashion with awfully little to show for it. The £9million spent on Okocha, a Nigerian star of the World Cup, has hardly looked a good investment, and centre-forward Ouedec has gone in a swap deal.

The result of Bietry's manic spending, with its minuscule returns, is that Canal Plus have now put a block on any more of it; new players may be bought only if present players are sold. But truth to tell Bietry's position had become untenable as soon as PSG brought back their former coach Artur Jorge, who had always blamed Bietry and his critical commentaries for the fact that he previously lost his job.

Jorge was scathing in his criticisms of the playing staff he had been saddled with; and Bietry had largely assembled it. Yet the ex-Milan centre-forward Marco Simone, who looked as if he might leave in the summer after an excellent season, but fortunately stayed, is one player on whom Jorge can rely.

Simone will now have help up front from Mickael Madar who, after his Spanish and English travails – it did not work out at Everton – is back in his native city. Now, he says, in all modesty, there should be another two or three thousand fans at Parc des Princes to see him.

Didier Couecou is back in football after seven years, plus a spell in jail (and the Bordeaux scandal which involved him years ago is still not finished; the tribunal sits again soon). He returns as sports director of struggling Toulouse, after seven long years of cultivating his garden; or rather his vineyard.

Many will remember Couecou as a fiery centre-forward, capped for France, three times a championship winner and a noted goalscorer with Bordeaux, Nice, Marseille and Nantes.

He seems to have calmed down somewhat, but the task before him is forbidding. "I now appreciate life more," he says.

● CLAUDE BEZ, the controversial former Bordeaux president, has died aged 58. Bez, who ran the club from 1978 to 1990, a period which saw them win two League titles and two domestic Cups, was forced out of the game in the early 1990s after a fraud scandal.

● MONACO have signed Wagneau Eloi from Lens as a replacement for Thierry Henry. Eloi cost Monaco £700,000.

Resignation...Jean Tigana

A big boot from Bixente

'Youth coaching system is all wrong'

BAYERN MUNICH'S French World Cup-winning wing-back Bixente Lizarazu has put the boot into German football in a way that has shaken the local coaching fraternity.

Germans always pride themselves on a streamlined, highly-effective youth coaching system. But, according to Lizarazu, the emphasis is all wrong. Commenting recently, he gave this as the reason why Germany flopped at France 98 and why German clubs generally are second-best to their Italian rivals in European competition.

It's not necessarily about money, either, although higher German tax rates hinder even Bayern Munich when competing in the international transfer market.

Lizarazu also claimed that German football is in crisis because it lacks young talent and puts fitness before skill.

He said: "France has players like Thierry Henry, David Trezeguet and Nicolas Anelka who are in their early 20s and already at the top level. There is nobody to compare in Germany.

"In France, technical skills are regarded as more important than physical condition."

German clubs, Lizarazu continued, should try to develop skills rather than physical strength: "In France's soccer schools, the emphasis is on the technical side. You can worry about fitness later.

"German football has a lot of problems. The national team is trying to change from a generation of experienced veteran players to a new model and it is no secret that it's not an easy thing to do. Also, the reason there are a lot of foreigners in the Bundesliga may not only be down to cost, but because the young German players coming through are not good enough."

Lizarazu, 29, joined Bayern in 1997 from Bilbao. He struggled with injuries in his first season but became a key member of France's World Cup squad, playing in all but one of the matches in the finals, and is now considered one of the best foreigners in the Bundesliga.

Not that foreigners dominate the pay stakes. Two Germans and one Bulgarian have been revealed as the top earners in the top flight. Krassimir Balakov, Stuttgart's playmaker, Bayern midfielder Stefan Effenberg and Dortmund's long-time-injured sweeper Matthias Sammer each earn £2.5million a year.

With players earning such sums it was hardly surprising that the federation decided to scrap the arrangement whereby veteran internationals were granted a farewell benefit match.

The first victim of the new ruling – to answer rising criticism of player earnings – was Jurgen Klinsmann, which caused a major rumpus. Klinsmann, angry at being singled out, quit in a huff as one of the 'ambassadors' for Germany's bid to host the 2006 World Cup. His original club, Stuttgart, were then 'encouraged' to arrange a match, as a compromise.

The controversy did not help the image of the World Cup bid effort – coming as it did amid confusion over reports that the DFB was seeking a trade-off over 2010 with South Africa, that Franz Beckenbauer was growing impatient with a failure of local government and big business to swing wholeheartedly behind the cause, and uncertainty over whether FIFA's demands on revenue clashed with German tax laws.

On the sports medicine front, at least, German football remains ahead of the pack – as the case of former Under-21 international Christian Wuck has proved.

Revolutionary knee surgery has raised hopes of reviving Wuck's career,

Speaking out...Bayern's Lizarazu

which appeared to have been ended prematurely by serious injury.

Wuck, who played 153 matches for Nurnberg and Karlsruhe before being forced to quit in 1997, has received a knee cartilage from a 50-year-old man who had died from a heart attack.

On the transfer front, Nurnberg brought World Cup goalkeeper Andreas Kopke home from Marseille, MSV Duisburg borrowed Senegalese striker Mamadou Diallo from Norwegian club Lillestrom, and fellow strugglers Hansa Rostock signed Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Emara from Al Ahly of Cairo.

Borussia Dortmund signed Yugoslav midfielder Miroslav Stevic from fellow Bundesliga club Munich 1860, while selling midfielder Steffen Freund to Tottenham, goalkeeper Stefan Klos to Rangers, Norway's Steinar Pedersen to IFK Gothenburg, and defender Knut Reinhardt to Nurnberg. To replace Klos, Dortmund signed former Schalke keeper Jens Lehmann, out of favour at Milan.

Munich 1860 replaced Stevic with Czech international Martin Cizek from Sparta Prague, Schalke sent Russian midfielder Denis Klyuyev home to Moscow Dynamo, and ambitious Hertha Berlin signed United States midfielder Tony Sanneh from DC United.

Keir Radnedge

Pro-file Tony Yeboah

Prolific Ghanaian aiming for quality finish

A CONTROVERSIAL career in Europe looks to be heading for a sedate ending when the current season comes to a close in Germany. That is the point at which Tony Yeboah, a prolific goalscorer and fervent battler with coaches, says he will head home to Kumasi in Ghana.

"Ten years in Europe is enough," says the 32-year-old Hamburg centre-forward, who is still scoring regularly in the Bundesliga, where he first made his name after leaving West Africa. Seven League goals at the winter break puts Yeboah in with a chance of taking the Bundesliga top goalscorer's award, which he won twice with Eintracht Frankfurt in the early 1990s.

But he says there is just one thing that would make him alter his plans after the season finishes. "I want to go home. Only if Hamburg qualify for European competition will I change my mind."

Yeboah arrived in Germany as a trialist from Okwahu United and went on to become one of the best African exports of all time. First, there was an explosion of goals at Second Division Saarbrucken and then even more at Eintracht Frankfurt. A total of 68 in five seasons made him a hero with the fans, but a fall-out with coach Jupp Heynckes led to a rapid transfer to England and Leeds United. "Heynckes was a good coach, but he had problems dealing with people," says Yeboah.

At Leeds, the Ghanaian started like a house on fire, his tally of 24 goals in two seasons including some memorable finishes that still enjoy re-runs on TV stations across Europe. But he fell out with the coach there, too, and spent months kicking his heels before heading back to Germany.

"I had a great time in Leeds – packed stadiums and great fans. But I had problems with George Graham and I really had to leave. I didn't like the English football either – running, fighting, war for 90 minutes without a break. I prefer a more intelligent game, holding up the ball and playing. Germany, for me, is more like home than England."

Now partnered by Martin Dahlin at Hamburg, he is aiming to help the club win a UEFA Cup place. "Winning the Bundesliga is not an option; I think Bayern have that wrapped up. But our coach, Frank Pagelsdorf, wants us to qualify for Europe next year, and I think, why not? It's possible."

At international level, Yeboah was a member of a very talented team who promised much but never delivered. There were disagreements with captain Abedi Pele. Both were strong characters from different cultural backgrounds – Yeboah is an Ashanti, Abedi Pele a Muslim – who were not happy with the other hogging the spotlight.

Yeboah made his Ghana debut in 1986 but his biggest disappointment is that his country never came close to qualifying for the World Cup. He featured in three African Nations Cup finals, helping Ghana to finish runners-up in Senegal in 1992, reach the quarter-finals in Tunisia in 1994 and the semi-finals in South Africa two years later.

Mark Gleeson

Club Hamburg (Ger)
Country Ghana
Born June 6, 1966, in Kumasi
Previous clubs Cornerstone, Okwahu United, Saarbrucken (Ger), Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger), Leeds United (Eng)
International debut February 1986, v Niger
International caps 50 (14 goals)
Honours Bundesliga leading goalscorer 1993, 1994

Keegan upsets the odds

Gavin Hamilton on Fulham's FA Cup thriller at the Villa

Clinched it...Steve Hayward celebrates his goal that secured Fulham's 2-0 victory at Villa Park

THE FA CUP, now the AXA-sponsored FA Cup, continues to exert a magnetic attraction even if giantkilling acts are in danger of becoming a thing of the past as the gap between rich and poor in English football continues to grow.

Ask Aston Villa manager John Gregory. His side, who have set such an impressive pace in this season's Premier League race, were highly fancied to overcome Second Division Fulham in a fourth-round tie. But Fulham are no ordinary Second Division side; they are backed by the millions of Mohamed Al Fayed and are managed by Kevin Keegan, who holds the curious title of chief operating officer.

Fulham had pulled off one of the shocks of the third round when they disposed of Premiership strugglers Southampton to set up a visit to Villa Park. There, two first-half goals by Simon Morgan and Steve Hayward – ironically the two members of Keegan's expensively assembled side not to have played in the top flight – gave them a memorable victory. An ever greater prize awaits with a trip to Manchester United in the fifth round.

Fulham's achievement was almost upstaged by First Division Oxford, who came within seconds of knocking out Premier League leaders Chelsea. With Oxford leading 1-0 in injury time, referee Mike Reed came to Chelsea's rescue, awarding a penalty when Gianluca Vialli fell in the area following what seemed like a legitimate challenge by Kevin Francis. Reed was the official who, two seasons ago, awarded a similarly controversial penalty to Chelsea at the expense of an aggrieved Leicester. Chelsea went on to win the Cup.

Following Reed's act of generosity, Chelsea have again been installed as front-runners. However, Manchester United's Cup challenge, despite their focus on the Champions League, looks equally strong.

United came from behind to beat Liverpool 2-1 in the tie of the fourth round. Michael Owen gave Liverpool a second-minute lead – then the next 88 minutes went a long way to demonstrating that they are no longer a soft touch under Gerard Houllier. They defended resolutely and only cracked in the closing minutes, when Dwight Yorke snatched an equaliser and then, in injury time, substitute Ole Gunnar Solskjaer grabbed a dramatic winner.

Elsewhere, the big guys continue to put the boot into the little guys. Swansea, who became the first Third Division side to eliminate Premier League opposition when they beat West Ham in the third round, fell to Derby County in the fourth. And Portsmouth, conquerors of Nottingham Forest, were hammered by Leeds.

You could do a lot worse than bet on Leeds, shaping up nicely under David O'Leary, reaching the Final in May. It will be the last game to be played at Wembley before the stadium is closed for redevelopment – and will not go to a replay if the scores are level after extra time. A penalty shoot-out will settle matters as a replay would have clashed with the Champions League Final on the following Wednesday.

It will take more than spot-kicks to settle a simmering dispute between Wimbledon and Spurs, who met five times in three weeks after being drawn against each other in League, FA Cup and League Cup. In the first encounter, Spurs' David Ginola incensed Wimbledon with a series of tumbles in the penalty area, none of which resulted in a penalty, though, curiously, nor did Ginola receive a booking for diving.

The 'Ginola: diva or diver?' debate has divided opinion in recent weeks. The Frenchman undoubtedly has an infuriating tendency to go to ground at the slightest opportunity. But that failing cannot disguise the fact that he has been the Premier League's outstanding player so far this season. If Spurs overcome Wimbledon and go on to win the League Cup, Ginola will have a strong case to be crowned Player of the Season.

Ron Atkinson is back. Nottingham Forest's response to their 1-0 FA Cup third-round defeat by Portsmouth was to sack manager Dave Bassett and call for Big Ron.

Unfortunately for Forest, Atkinson was enjoying a holiday in Barbados, which he was unwilling to cut short. But, true to style, Atkinson took up Forest's offer, wrote his programme notes on the beach and flew in to see his new team lose at home to Arsenal.

The task facing Atkinson cannot be under-estimated. In essence, bottom-placed Forest have the same side that was relegated two seasons ago. Atkinson has added Carlton Palmer from Southampton but he will not receive the funds that he has been given at other clubs for major purchases.

While Forest battle for survival on limited resources, Wimbledon surprised everybody by paying West Ham a staggering £7million for striker John Hartson, thereby smashing their transfer record, which had previously stood at £2m. Amid the hullabaloo over Hartson, a player with a questionable disciplinary and fitness record, Arsenal's signing of Nigerian Nwankwo Kanu went virtually unnoticed. The former Ajax forward joined from Internazionale in a £4.5m deal after passing a rigorous medical.

West Ham caused more than a few eyebrows to be raised when, having signed Cameroon midfield player Marc Vivien Foe for £4.2m from Lens, they took a £1.7m gamble on the volatile Paolo Di Canio. The Italian thus drew a line under his unhappy sojourn at Sheffield Wednesday, which ended with him being suspended for 11 games after his notorious push on referee Paul Alcock in September. The incident also cost him £200,000 in fines and lost wages.

Republic of Ireland wing-back Jason McAteer, unable to command a regular first-team place under the Houllier regime at Anfield, became a £4.4m convert to Brian Kidd's revolution at Blackburn Rovers.

SCOTLAND

Hegarty humbled as Stewart soars

THE THIRD ROUND of the Scottish Cup produced an uncharacteristically high quota of shock results, with four Premier League sides, including holders Hearts, making early exits, three of them being defeated by lower-division opposition.

The most significant result, perhaps, was at Pittodrie, where Aberdeen, under the temporary managership of Paul Hegarty, succumbed to Second Division Livingston.

Hegarty was offered the manager's job until the end of the season on a 'prove you're good enough' basis following Alex Miller's departure, but results like that will hardly enhance anyone's perception of his suitability.

In stark contrast, everything appears positive at Livingston, who are leading Division Two under former West Ham defender Ray Stewart. He has been particularly astute in transfer dealings and has assembled a formidable squad, including John Robertson, the former Hearts stalwart.

Robertson scored the goal which defeated Aberdeen and propelled Livingston into the fourth round, and was in no doubt about its significance. "That is the most memorable result in the club's history," he said. "Maybe it doesn't compare to winning the Cup with Hearts, but it's a great feeling."

Problems...Marko Viduka

Rangers and Celtic eased into the next round, with Celtic's win over Airdrie providing the backdrop for Marko Viduka's return to Glasgow. The Australian striker had not kicked a ball for Celtic during the controversy surrounding his move from Croatia Zagreb, but a reappearance in Scotland after a protracted break in his homeland suggested that his various problems were close to being resolved.

David Murray, chairman of Rangers, has promised manager Dick Advocaat that he will provide funding to create a custom-built training centre. Murray visited Holland with Advocaat recently, and was impressed with the facilities at the Dutchman's former club, PSV Eindhoven.

Plans to increase the seating capacity at Ibrox and a proposal for a new restaurant have been shelved in order to ensure that the training facilities are given suitable priority.

Alan Fairley

WALES

Away form keeps Lido afloat

AFAN LIDO have struggled at home on their return to the top division, gaining only three points in six matches. Their away form, however, has hit the headlines, with victories over three of the title-chasing sides.

After inflicting a rare defeat on Barry Town, they went to second-placed Inter CableTel and won 1-0, then hammered fourth-placed Cwmbran Town 4-0.

Barry's hopes of securing their fourth consecutive title rest largely on Eifion Williams, last season's runner-up in the European goalscoring charts, but who could be on his way to Portsmouth.

Wales' Euro 2000 qualifier against Denmark looks likely to be switched from Liverpool to Cardiff. The national side's resurgent form has raised hopes of finishing runners-up in the group, and the Welsh FA feels that a small ground full to capacity would provide a better atmosphere. The Danes have given the change the all-clear, making it unlikely that UEFA will have any objection.

Mel Thomas

N.IRELAND

Security concerns force match switch

POLITICAL unrest continues to exert an undue influence on the affairs of Northern Ireland football. The Premier League match between Portadown and Cliftonville, scheduled for Portadown's Shamrock Park, was switched by the security authorities to Cliftonville's Solitude stadium, in North Belfast, because the safety of Cliftonville players and supporters could not be guaranteed.

Portadown supporters were banned from the game, which Cliftonville won 1-0, despite being down to 10 men after seven minutes when Peter Withnell was sent off in only his second game for the club.

Defeat will not have improved Portadown's morale as they fight to avoid relegation, nor will the fact that striker Vinny Arkins, the Premier League's top scorer last season with 22 goals, has been transfer-listed because the club is struggling to make ends meet.

Roy Kitson

Pro-file Sol Campbell

Cornerstone for club and country

ENGLAND have certainly had their problems since France 98, but the form of Sol Campbell has not been one of them. Over the past two years, the Tottenham defender has become a regular for the national side and his composure at the highest level has won him great acclaim.

Campbell, who has been capped 24 times, says that adopting the right mental attitude is a key part of being able to perform well at international level. "You have to be able to focus on a game and not worry about the quality of players you are up against. You respect opponents, but you can't allow yourself to be intimidated. All players are human, they all make mistakes."

After the mental adjustment comes the physical act of defending. So how do you set about stopping someone like Ronaldo? "It is all about cutting down their space. You can't give quality international strikers time. If you smother the ball and their space, there isn't much they can do about it. And you have to be up for it from the start, as you must not give the opposition encouragement early on."

Campbell is clearly one of England's key players, and having been at the heart of the action during the team's less-than-impressive start to the Euro 2000 qualifiers, he is ideally placed to assess the situation. "Things are not good, but they are not as bad as we have been reading, either. Now we will be judged in the games against Poland and Sweden later this year, and I believe we will still qualify."

Campbell is also adamant that the team, who face France in a friendly on February 10, will not let the rumours of a rift between the players and coach Glenn Hoddle distract them from the task in hand. "The spirit in the camp is fine. People are going to write whatever they want, but we know that our job is all about winning games for England."

Moreover, he has some criticism of his own for the critics. "Some people need to look at the bigger picture and avoid being so negative. I'm sure these people who have been slagging us off want England to qualify for the European Championship."

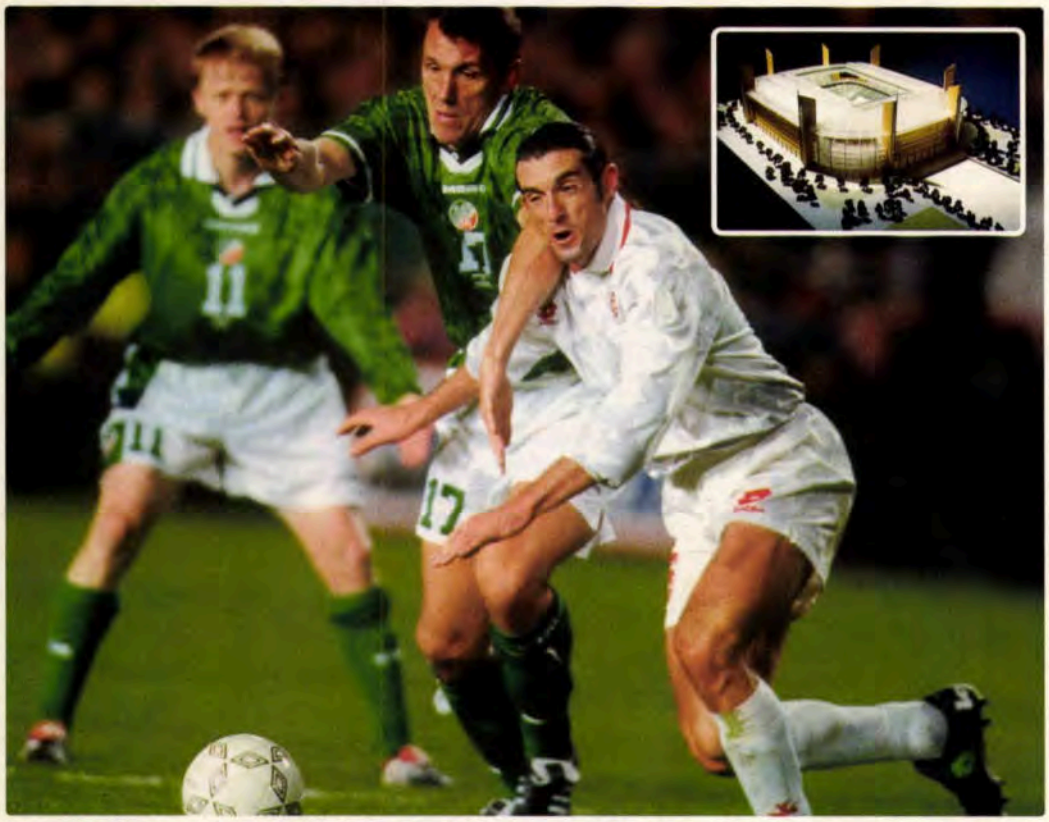
Campbell takes the opportunity to display his loyalty to Hoddle, who made him captain of the national side in the friendly against the Czech Republic last November. "We are all behind the boss, of course. You are bound to get a few funny results along the way and things will change in the group. If we beat Poland in March, it will look very different."

At Tottenham, since George Graham's arrival earlier this season, there has already been a transformation. Campbell, a Spurs regular since 1993-94 and with almost 200 League appearances, is relishing the change in atmosphere.

"Training is hard, but I like it that way," he says. "There is a much more businesslike feel to the whole thing. You know you are there to work and it feels good."

Kevin Palmer

Club Tottenham Hotspur
Country England
Born September 18, 1974, in Newham, London
International debut May 1996, v Hungary
International caps 24 (0 goals)



Super sub...Tony Cascarino (centre) is eligible for an FAI testimonial, and (inset), a model of the proposed showpiece stadium

At last – a new home for the Republic

Sean Creedon on plans for a state-of-the-art stadium in Dublin

REP IRELAND

IRISH SOCCER is to have its own all-purpose 45,000-seat stadium on the outskirts of Dublin. The Football Association of Ireland, who have used Dalymount Park and Lansdowne Road for home internationals and cup finals for 77 years, finally have permission to build a new ground, provisionally named The Arena until a sponsor is found.

Mark McCormack's International Management Group has been hired to market the venue, and the loans will be raised by Deutsche Bank. The multi-purpose stadium, which will have a removable pitch and retractable roof, will be built by Dutch company HBG. Detailed plans have not yet been passed, but there are hopes that the stadium will be ready by September 2001, and the FAI say that they will apply to host the UEFA Cup Final in 2002.

A request from John Aldridge and Ray Houghton for a joint testimonial game has been turned down because it came too late to be considered for this season, but the pair can apply again next year.

The FAI are one of the few associations who still give benefit games to former internationals. They have raised the qualifying level from 50 to 75 caps, which would rule out Aldridge and Houghton – but the question is, did they qualify for a benefit game when the caps level was 50?

Tony Cascarino is one player who qualifies under the new rule, although 40 of his 79 caps were won as a substitute, which may be a world record.

Either way it's an amazing feat by 'O'Cascarin' – now 36 – who was first capped under Eoin Hand in 1985. Even more so when you consider that he was ignored during Jack Charlton's first two years in charge.

There's no stopping Cork City, the Premier Division leaders, who have taken the first silverware of the season by beating Shamrock Rovers 2-1 in the League Cup Final. With the FAI Cup already in residence on Leeside, Cork will be hoping to make it a clean sweep of trophies by clinching the League title in April. Their only challengers are reigning champions St Patrick's Athletic.

Crowds are returning to Cork, and for the second leg of the League Cup Final Turner's Cross was packed with 9,000 supporters. Cork, the Republic's second largest city, has only one League club at present, while in Dublin six clubs are trying to share the same cake.

Shamrock Rovers have won the FAI Cup a record 24 times and at least once in every decade since the 1920s, but have been suffering a bad spell. Their first-round defeat by Shelbourne means that they cannot now win the Cup in this decade, so for Rovers fans it's a case of roll on the millennium.

Shelbourne now face a rejuvenated Bohemians, but for nostalgia the tie of the round is the meeting of Sligo Rovers and Cobh Ramblers at The Showgrounds. In 1983 Cobh, then a non-League team, had a marathon semi-final battle with Sligo, who went on to win the Cup for the first time.

HOLLAND

Twins leave and Kinkladze will follow

SIX MONTHS later than they wanted, but six months earlier than expected, Frank and Ronald De Boer finally left Ajax for Barcelona.

During the winter break, the Amsterdam club sold the twins to the Spanish giants for £13million, although the brothers had promised to finish the season at Ajax.

At first Barcelona were interested in signing only Frank, saying the defender is much more needed than the midfielder. But Ajax would not permit the deal unless Barça took Ronald as well.

The two internationals, who admitted they had put a horrible period behind them, were delighted to join the Dutch colony in Spain. Ronald said: "We have been booed, we have received death threats, but we thank Barcelona for being behind us all the way."

Now new Ajax coach Jan Wouters must look for replacements for the twins as well as summer signing Georgi Kinkladze, who has not convinced the coaching staff or the fans in his role as a winger and has been told he can go.

Wouters had hoped he could add Michael Mols to his squad, but the player has postponed a decision about his future until the end of the season after an emotional plea by Utrecht supporters.

Feyenoord, still top of the table and the championship favourites, will not forget their Turkish training camp. First there were happy faces when coach Leo Beenhakker decided to prolong his contract until 2000. Then thieves stole mobile phones, passports and watches from their changing rooms during a match against Galatasaray.

Beenhakker has decided to drop Igor Korneyev, Fernando Picun and Pablo Sanchez from his squad. According to the coach, these players were reducing the chances of Feyenoord's youth players breaking into the first team.

Feyenoord's neighbours, Sparta, have appointed Jan Everse as their new coach. Everse, a local boy who coached Second Division FC Zwolle, has the difficult task of avoiding relegation. He has signed Ali El Khattabi, a Moroccan international who was part of Sparta's youth system before moving to Heerenveen.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

AUSTRIA

Betting boss causes worries

MOST top-flight clubs are in financial trouble, with the likely exceptions of Rapid and Salzburg, and they seem to be the only two not in favour of the Austrian Federal League's endorsement of millionaire Frank Strohsack.

He has pumped almost £1million into ailing Austria Wien and now he may be

offered the presidency of the League. The worry is his business interest in betting.

Linz ASK probably will not mind if new money becomes available. Their sponsor, Wolfgang Rieger, owner of a private bank, allegedly decamped with some £1.5m, but he has been traced and is under investigation by the Finance Police.

Linz ASK are also seeking a new coach: Otto Baric has left after only six months.

Vorwaerts Steyr start the second half of the season under new management, too. Dietmar Constantini and Rudolf Eggenberger got them up last season; now veteran German Jurgen Sundermann has the task of keeping them there.

Bob Vaughan

BELGIUM

Anthuenis set to coach Anderlecht

ANDERLECHT, who resumed after the mid-season break by twice coming from a goal down to earn a 3-2 victory at Mouscron, have named the coach who, they hope, will lead them back to former glories.

Aime Anthuenis, the 55-year-old who guided Genk to their first Belgian Cup triumph last May, has signed a three-year contract starting next season.

Until then he will stay with Genk, who are doing their utmost to retain the trophy. Assuming they have not run out of the luck that served them so well against Mouscron, who hit the woodwork three times before bowing out 4-3 in extra time, Genk should justify their tag as Cup favourites. They visit St Truiden in the quarter-finals.

Anderlecht will see out the season under the care of Jean Dockx, former assistant to Arie Haan – who left in October – and Frankie Vercauteren.

Once Anthuenis had made his decision, Genk promptly announced that they would replace him with Jos Heyligen, who helped Westerlo in their sudden rise to the top.

Lommel, having sacked Leo Clijsters as coach, have appointed Jos Daerden, who will be hoping for better fortunes than he enjoyed as successor to Eric Gerets at Lierse.

Club Brugge, who are resigned to losing Gerets to PSV Eindhoven at the end of the season, have yet to name his replacement. Meanwhile, they retained pole position with a 3-2 win over St Truiden, although Genk are pushing hard in their pursuit of the Double. They are two points behind Brugge, with Lokeren seven points further back.

As expected, 37-year-old Brugge midfielder Franky Van der Elst has been confirmed as the first coach of the newly amalgamated club in Antwerp, Germinal Beerschot Metropol, who begin life next season.

Nicholas Harling

New challenge...Franky Van der Elst

LUXEMBOURG

Dudelange keep up the pressure

DUDELANGE, the leaders, wasted little time when the National Division restarted late after the winter break because of bad weather.

They beat Spora 3-0 with goals from Ailijaz (2) and Cardoni to pull further away from defending champions Jeunesse Esch, beaten 2-0 by Grevenmacher.

Union stayed in second place with a 2-0 win over Mertzig.

The national squad have two friendlies against Iceland coming up, plus a match against Ostend in Belgium, but will be without first-choice goalkeeper Paul Koch, who has quit because of family commitments.

Tim Brice

PORTUGAL

Benfica on track

BENFICA returned to action after the winter break and immediately had their fans forecasting yet another championship success.

The Lisbon Eagles won 1-0 away to Amadora, where no other visiting side had taken full points, then beat Sporting Lisbon 2-1 at Alvalade. So after two games Graeme Souness' men had picked up a point on Porto, leaving them just one behind, and one ahead of Boavista.

Porto coach Fernando Santos and his team are not doing too well. Souness and company, in contrast, are earning praise.

Nuno Gomes, the leading scorer, seems sure to go far in club and international football, while the British contingent are worthy of extra applause, having battled to win round the fans, who had objected to so many foreigners taking places ahead of locals. Now Michael Thomas, Mark Pembridge, Gary Charles and the latest arrival, Dean Saunders are all favourites.

Clouding the horizon are rumours that Souness might leave at the end of the season, especially if he wins the title, and that he wants to return to England because of family matters. Time will tell.

Alberto da Silva

Pro-file Sven Vermant

New jewel in the Belgian crown

OUT WITH the old, in with the new. Club Brugge midfielder Sven Vermant is one of several newcomers expected to freshen up the Belgium team in time for the country's co-hosting of the Euro 2000 finals.

National manager Georges Leekens had no other option but to go for a massive transfusion of new blood following the Red Devils' first-round elimination at last year's World Cup. Though marvellous servants of the team, the old guard of Franky Van der Elst, Lorenzo Staelens, Enzo Scifo and Philip De Wilde had come to the end of the line. So, for the side's first outing of this season, a friendly in Luxembourg, Leekens grasped the nettle of squad rejuvenation.

Included in the line-up for that disappointing goalless draw were Club Brugge defender Tjorven De Brul, Spain-based keeper Ronny Gaspercic, Lokeren schemer Christian Janssens, Westerlo attacker Toni Brogno and PSV Eindhoven left-back Davy Oyen. But of all those drafted into the reconstructed team, arguably the most likely to make the grade in the international arena is Vermant, a key man in Club Brugge's current dominance of the Belgian championship.

A 20-year-old of great promise at the time of his move from KV Mechelen in the summer of 1993, Vermant's influence at the Flemish club has grown steadily over the seasons, and he now rates as one of the First Division's most accomplished performers.

It is hard to fathom why he had won only a single cap before the Luxembourg game – an appearance as a substitute in a Euro 96 qualifier against Armenia. Nominally a left-sided midfielder but also at ease in a more central position or pushed forward on the shoulders of the front-runners, Vermant is an all-purpose player, combative, full of stamina and boasting an enviable line in attacking inspiration.

He supports his forwards well, is a fine crosser of the ball and certainly knows how to finish, too. Indeed, the Vermant speciality is popping up with vital goals in big games. Guess who was on target in Club Brugge's 1995 Belgian Cup Final victory against Ekeren, the 1-1 draw away to VfB Stuttgart in the UEFA Cup last autumn and the win over Genk in a top-of-the-table clash earlier this season?

"I'm not really sure if I really do have this habit of scoring in important matches," says Vermant. "But I love it when I'm involved in a game where there's a lot at stake. I'm lucky because at Club Brugge there's no shortage of high-profile fixtures to keep you motivated.

"Naturally, I'm very keen to play at Euro 2000, especially since Belgium are one of the hosts. It's nice to be in with a chance of selection for the finals but a lot can happen between now and then and it's up to me to put in the work."

Nick Bidwell

Club Club Brugge
Country Belgium
Born April 4, 1973, in Mechelen
Previous club KV Mechelen
International debut October 1995, v Armenia
International caps 2 (0 goals)
Honours Belgian League 1996, 1998 (Club Brugge); Belgian Cup 1995, 1996 (Club Brugge)

Cash crisis

Galatasaray have big problems and the authorities are making things worse, writes Hasan Cemali

TURKEY

PLAYERS at the country's biggest club go without wages, a top star blames an agent's interference for the collapse of a proposed move to Italy, and the game's rulers vote for a measure that will help clubs get into more financial difficulty.

These three stories have been dominating the headlines in recent weeks, showing yet again that Turkish football has more than its share of problems, and that most of those problems concern money.

Galatasaray, 12 times champions, were banking on another Champions League place to help them through a financial crisis. It did not happen. So the club – planning a £70million renovation of the Ali Sami Yen stadium – were caught short of cash. So short, indeed, that with interest payments being made on debts rumoured to be upwards of £33m, there was not enough left to pay players and staff.

As a result, salaries were put on hold while the club hastily put together a deal with Real Betis, who paid around £2.5m to take Romanian midfielder Iulian Filipescu to Spain.

This has allowed the players to be paid, for now, but coach Fatih Terim is still said to be owed nearly £600,000.

No deal...Hakan Sukur

The proposed sale of Hakan 'Bull of the Bosporus' Sukur to Juventus collapsed after he and the club apparently had agreed on all the issues involved. As Hakan was waiting to sign the papers, an 'agent' emerged and told the Juventus officials that a down payment of £600,000 was needed before he would do so. Juve refused to pay it; Hakan denied having asked for it. But the situation worsened and eventually the meeting broke up with no deal having been signed.

Hakan said later: "Some people were trying to make a personal profit from my transfer, so I did not give them the chance. To some, money is more important than anything. But not to me."

Galatasaray had been hoping that Juventus would pay as much as £9m for Hakan, the joint top scorer in Turkey with 12 goals. However, everybody seems to have forgotten that he had a short spell with Torino in 1996, but after scoring in his first game was unable to settle in Italy and soon afterwards was transferred back, with just that single goal to his credit.

Galatasaray, Fenerbahce, Besiktas and Trabzonspor are the Big Four in Turkey. So presumably these clubs were the prime movers when, as the Turkish Football Federation say, pressure was brought to bear over the question of foreign players in the country.

Some people might think that importing foreigners costing huge transfer fees and high wages (plus the cost of the occasional journey home, etc) might be a bad thing, and that saturation point had been reached. So was the 'pressure that was brought to bear' aimed at getting the TFF to reduce the permitted number of foreign nationals in each line-up from four to three, or even two? No. It was aimed at *increasing* the number – and what's more, the TFF have agreed. From next season, five foreigners in any given 11 will be permitted. With this new ruling in mind, one wonders which club will be the next to leave players short of their salaries.

One final point: up to now Turkish professionals have been exempt from paying tax on any direct earnings from football. But that loophole has now been closed. From next year they have to pay it like everybody else.

Fenerbahce won six games in a row to lead the table with 38 points from 17 games. Besiktas were second on goal difference, Galatasaray third with 37 and Trabzonspor fourth on 36.

GREECE

League facing a cut in clubs

THE GREEK government is refusing to give in to the clubs' demands for a greater share of earnings from the state-organised soccer pool, Pro Po, and the already troubled season is heading for more stormy weather.

At the moment, the clubs receive eight per cent of Pro Po earnings, but now want 12 per cent. Under-secretary of Sport Andreas Fouras said the government would not accept such "extravagant" demands. In response, the professional clubs staged a three-week strike in December demanding more state subsidies and money owed to them by the ministry from last season. They also want a stake in new betting games planned by the state gambling agency OPAP, and said they will repeat their action if their demands are not met.

But Fouras says: "Greece cannot afford 72 professional soccer teams. This has been seen for some time and we need to make changes now. If the soccer federation does not go through with making the change, the government will. We cannot have a major league with teams that sell 200 to 250 tickets. We must have financial criteria to decide which clubs can afford to stay in the major league."

The under-secretary has been calling for there to be 14 teams instead of 18 in the First Division. Most clubs face serious economic problems, many playing to half-empty stadiums after a number of hooligan incidents, and there have also been allegations of corruption.

A Thessaloniki court recently sentenced five soccer hooligans to five months in jail and fines of £112 each for their part in violence that disrupted an Aris-Olympiakos Cup match. About 20 police officers were injured during the unrest, none seriously, when hooligans hurled rocks and planks. The violence forced a 30-minute hold-up before Olympiakos won 3-1.

Lou Economopoulos

ISRAEL

Mizrahi leaves at the wrong time

MACCABI HAIFA striker Alon Mizrahi has signed for French Second Division club Nice and left his ground-breaking team to manage without him.

Mizrahi had scored six goals as his club became the first from Israel to reach the last eight of a European competition – the Cup-winners Cup.

He was looking forward to the quarter-final against Lokomotiv Moscow, but the offer from Nice – nearly £1million – was too much to refuse. "At least I've helped to put Israeli football on the map," he said, "and that's something of which I can be proud."

Mizrahi, who has scored nine goals in 25 games for Israel, will be missed by his club. He has a great scoring record in the Israeli League, having topped the goals table in no fewer than five seasons. Maccabi are hoping to replace him with another Israeli international, Ronen Harazi.

There was more ground-breaking during a tri-nation tournament held as part of the Israeli FA's 70th anniversary and won by Norway, ahead of Israel and Estonia. The decisive match, in which Estonia came from three down to draw with the Norwegians, was played before 6,000 at Umm el-Fahm, on the Arab-Israeli border. It was the first international to be held outside Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, and the first played in Israel's Arab sector.

Israel beat Estonia 7-0, but lost 1-0 to Norway.

Ori Lewis

French Riviera bound...Alon Mizrahi

MALTA

Champions march on

VALLETTA's relentless march towards their 17th championship goes on. They have a nine-point lead over Birkirkara, who nevertheless still mean business, as they showed when beating Floriana 4-0. Sliema are third, 15 points adrift.

The national side have two important friendlies coming up, against Bosnia and Poland. The last Euro qualifier defeat, to Macedonia, was Malta's 18th consecutive loss in the European and World Cup preliminary rounds.

They last won a point back in April 1995, away to Belarus, and the last home point dates back to October 1994, against the Czech Republic. Something must be done, and these friendlies may provide a hint or two.

Domenico Aquilina

SWEDEN

IFK carry on building

IFK GOTHENBURG are desperate to put things right after two fruitless seasons, and have been busy amassing a new squad.

International stopper Teddy Lucic's move to Bologna of Italy was countered by the signing of Norwegian Steinar Pedersen from Dortmund and Johan Anegrund was called back from his loan spell with Frolunda.

Veteran striker Stefan Pettersson will continue at IFK, and so will the reliable Magnus Erlingmark, who turned down a move to China at the last moment.

Erik Nevland has been recruited on loan from Manchester United, and IFK's new general manager, Roger Gustafsson, has hinted that the clubs could co-operate even more in the future.

But IFK no longer want Thomas Ravelli, 40 next August, in goal. Ravelli, back from MLS in America, flirted briefly with Norway's Valerenga with an eye on their Cup-winners Cup clash with Chelsea. Promoted Djurgarden have made him an offer, but for now he is keeping his options open.

An era ended in Swedish soccer when Malmo chairman Hans Bjorkman-Cavalli decided to step down after 25 years. Among his most inspired moves was the appointment of two English coaches, Bob Houghton and, later, Roy Hodgson.

Bjorkman-Cavalli says: "Houghton was only 26 when he came to us, and people thought I was mad to hire such a young coach. A few years later he steered us to the Final of the European Cup, which is still the greatest achievement in the club's history."

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

FC Jokerit are born

AS EXPECTED, PK-35, who finished third last season, have changed their name to FC Jokerit to please new owner Harry Harkimo. Under his leadership Jokerit have become perhaps Finland's richest ice hockey club, and he says that it is easier to find sponsors for an established brand name.

He also hopes that the fans who have been watching Jokerit play ice hockey will come to watch the football team as well. "At the moment we are about 20 miles behind HJK Helsinki, but I am sure that in three years we will overhaul them and become the top club here," asserts Harkimo.

The new club continued their spending spree by signing former national team stopper Aki Hyrlainen from FC Copenhagen.

VPS Vaasa will be coached next season by Soren Cratz, a Swede recently with Trelleborgs. TPV Tampere's new coach is Jan Mak, a Dutchman with plenty of experience in Swedish soccer.

Pentti Hietanen

NORWAY

Struggle ahead for Semb

NATIONAL team manager Nils Johan Semb's shaky start in the qualification programme for Euro 2000 – his team have won only four points out of nine – has the fans worried. After Egil Olsen's nine-year reign brought so many memorable performances and good results, Semb does not have an easy task ahead.

After a 1-1 draw against Egypt in a friendly, Semb gathered all the English-based footballers for training in Blackburn. Then, early this year, he took his team to Israel for a tri-nation tournament in which their mixture of familiar and fresh faces emerged triumphant.

Against Israel, Norway played like the Olsen teams. A 4-5-1 formation based on solid defensive work gave the Israelis, who had beaten Estonia 7-0 in the first match, little room to play their attacking football. Norway won 2-0, and had goalkeeper Frode Olsen of Stabaek to thank for keeping a clean sheet. He went on in the second half and showed why he is considered to be as good as the keepers who play for foreign clubs.

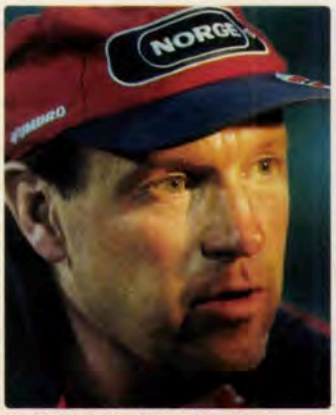
Bjorn Otto Bragstad, the Rosenborg central defender, made his debut in this match and what a debut! His pace and strength in the air make him the ideal partner to Erik Hoftun, the other Rosenborg stopper.

In the second match, against Estonia, Norway were cruising to a 3-0 victory 15 minutes from time, but after making several substitutions and conceding a penalty they fell apart and the Estonians scored another two to make it 3-3.

"This was annoying and completely unnecessary," said Semb. "It reduced the pleasure of winning the tournament."

Domestic clubs compete in large indoor tournaments during the winter. The first was won by Kongsvinger, who beat Lillestrom 3-1 in the Final. Brann won bronze medals by hammering Valerenga 4-0 – not a good omen for Vala before they meet Chelsea in the Cup-winners Cup.

Sigurd Odegaard



Problem start...Nils Johan Semb

Team focus Valerenga

Flying the flag for Norway

EGIL OLSEN moulded Norway's international team to compete with the best. Now he aims to do the same for his old club, Valerenga. More than 3,000 fans are expected to follow the Oslo club to the Cup-winners Cup quarter-final first leg at Chelsea hoping – and believing – that VIF can continue their amazing improvement since Olsen returned last August.

When Norway's most successful international boss arrived – initially as 'temporary consultant' to coach Lars Tjernaas – VIF were staring relegation in the face. They had won only three League matches out of 17, conceded 42 goals and had still to gain an away point.

'Drillo' Olsen (above) resorted to trusted methods. He changed the formation from 4-4-2 to 4-5-1 to protect the defence, left hugely-promising teenager John Carew to forage up front, and relied on the direct approach that was his international trademark.

Rewards were immediate. VIF won seven of their next nine matches, conceding only six goals, and reached seventh place after a 5-0 last-day win at Stromsgodset. Carew, who scored twice that day, summed up Olsen's impact, saying: "He has changed things around. We have tightened up and he has made us more resilient."

That was apparent in the Cup-winners Cup. Valerenga had knocked out Rapid Bucharest on away goals to earn a second-round tie against Besiktas. They took a 1-0 first-leg lead to Istanbul but after an hour Besiktas led 3-0. VIF were desperate – then cast caution aside and staged an amazing recovery. Knut Henry Haraldsen pulled one back, Kjell Roar Kaasa made it 3-2 on the night – and with 13 minutes left, Carew scored the goal that clinched Valerenga's first European quarter-final place.

It's no surprise that they have now signed Olsen as head coach on a three-year contract with Tjernaas as his second in command.

But Olsen faces problems before the game at Stamford Bridge. For a start – because of the enforced Scandinavian winter break – Valerenga have not played a competitive match since that win over Stromsgodset on November 25. They will also be without first-choice goalkeeper, Tore Krogstad, who has a long-term injury. Signing a replacement was VIF's priority before they left for their training camp in South Africa, with IFK Gothenburg's Dick Last the top target.

Olsen surely will opt for solidity at Stamford Bridge. Key men in his game plan are the towering 22-year-old Haraldsen, tenacious Hoi Ngoc Tran, a Norwegian Under-21 international of Vietnamese descent, plus experienced fellow defenders Frederik Kjolner and Joachim Walltin. In midfield, Bjorn Arild Levernes, Dag Riisnaes and Bjorn Viljugrein will lead the harrying and hustling that are other Olsen trademarks.

Ahead of them, 19-year-old Carew, who made his full international debut in November, needs three goals to become Valerenga's all-time leading scorer in Europe.

VIF's approach may not be pretty, but it might be effective. A summary, maybe, of the pragmatism that has made Olsen the most efficient of Norwegian coaches.

Kevin Connolly

Back at the helm...Oleg Romantsev

Romantsev to the rescue

Victor Gusev on the not-so-new national coach

RUSSIA

OLEG ROMANTSEV, back in the hot seat reserved for coaches of the Russian national squad, is looking on the bright side. He is not disheartened by a played three, lost three record so far in the qualifying group for next year's European Championship, and points out that there are still seven games to go.

"We'll take the matches one at a time, do our absolute best in all of them, and see what happens," he says.

Romantsev will need to get his players to show better form than they did in their defeats by Ukraine, France and Iceland in the qualifiers in autumn, results which led coach Anatoli Byshovets to quit the national job after only six months.

Now Romantsev is likely to use home-based players as much as possible, and is certain to favour men from Moscow Spartak: he used to play for the club, has been coach there for nearly four years, and intends to carry on with that job in addition to handling the national squad.

His first match in charge is in Armenia on March 27, and he may limit his 'foreigners' to three former Spartak midfielders – Alexander Mostovoi and Valeri Karpin of Celta Vigo, and Dmitri Alenichev of Roma.

Romantsev was in charge of the squad (which included Mostovoi and Karpin) at Euro 96. The Russians did extremely well in their qualifying group for that tournament, winning eight games and drawing the other two, but at the finals they gained only one point from their three matches, and he resigned on returning from England.

Now Romantsev is back, having won the approval of the Russian Football Union's executive committee. Members were not entirely in favour of his club-plus-country approach, but he nevertheless beat the other leading candidate, Valeri Gazzayev, who had promised to quit his club duties with Vladikavkaz if he got the national job.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Rada and Hapal come home

LIKELY champions Sparta do not have much money to buy players over the winter, the problem being that a new chief sponsor cannot be found.

The interim answer has been to take on two Slovaks from cousin club FC Kosice, who like Sparta are owned by the Rezes industrial family. Vlado Prohaszka, who has been with Kosice only briefly, and Minoslav Sovic, an FCK regular in midfield, thus move from the aegis of Rezes Senior to that of Rezes Junior.

Slavia and Olomouc have landed better-known though not very fresh fish for the second half of the season. Karel Rada has persuaded Trabzonspor to let him go on loan to the former, while Olomouc might be taking a risk offering loan terms to Pavel Hapal. He has been abroad for over five years, latterly at Tenerife where he has been on the injury list more often than not.

Leaving Slavia is Croatian defender Sladjan Asanin. He missed hardly a game last season, but Borussia Monchengladbach's offer was too good to resist.

Bob Vaughan

SLOVAKIA

Galis is keeping busy

INTEREST currently focuses on Slovaks abroad, two in Scotland and one in the north-east of England. The Slovak in England is Vladimir Kinder of Middlesbrough. He has become a forgotten man, and needs some games before the Euro 2000 qualifying rounds resume. Any offers?

Meanwhile, there is still speculation about the future of Celtic manager Jozef Venglos. Lubos Moravcik's future is linked with that of his club manager, and doubtlessly both would be welcome back in Slovakia at any time.

New national coach Dusan Galis probably needs his team captain, now 33, nearer home as he prepares for the forthcoming Euro 2000 ties, which include two derbies with the Hungarians.

Although offered the post some weeks ago, Galis hesitated before officially accepting because he was anxious to retain his post in charge of the title favourites, Trnava.

The FA agreed to this arrangement and Galis has now signed up, but one wonders how he can cope with club preparations for the second half of the season as well as national squad training camp.

Bob Vaughan

ROMANIA

President in trouble

DEEP in the winter break there has been another whiff of domestic soccer scandal. Dinamo president Petre Budur is in trouble. After his office and home had been searched, he was arrested and charged with falsification of documents. It is unclear how this will affect the club, who jointly led the table at halfway.

The last thing the Romanian game wants at the moment is more dark dealings, after the suspicions at the end of last year's championship run-in.

Bob Vaughan

HUNGARY

Don't slip on the Slate!

FOR YEARS now, football fans in Hungary have said that things can only get better, but the improvement is a long time coming, and it may not yet be in sight.

The forthcoming Euro 2000 qualifiers involve what should be a doddle against Liechtenstein at the end of March (but remember Iceland). Four days later Hungary go to Bratislava for their first competitive game against Slovakia.

Two jobs...Dusan Galis

Coach Bertalan Bicskei can no more afford to slip on the Slovak 'Slate Field' than he can against Liechtenstein, but it will be a difficult tie both on and off the pitch, with as much security surrounding the stadium as at any game in the region in recent times.

Slovan and Ferencvaros fans behaved so badly during a European Cup game not so many seasons ago that the visiting supporters were virtually refused facilities for the return.

Bicskei's main football problem is finding a settled team. Last season he and his predecessor, Janos Csank, used almost 50 players in 11 games.

In the League, nobody will bet on any team but MTK.

Bob Vaughan

BULGARIA

'Ivailo who?' wins

A BAD YEAR for Bulgarian football ended on a strange note when Ivailo Iordanov of Sporting Lisbon was voted Footballer of the Year.

It is difficult to know how this

defender/midfielder won the title. His club football last season was restricted to 15 appearances in the Portuguese League, eight of them as substitute. He scored three times.

He was slightly more than a marginal member of the squad who went to France 98, but outside this country people will be asking, "Ivailo who?"

The Bulgarian journalists who voted must know something or have seen things at the World Cup others did not.

The younger generation must be given a chance when Bulgaria resume the Euro 2000 campaign with what should be a comfortable tie in Luxembourg. Only a win would conserve a minimal chance of finishing first or second in Group 5.

Visits to Poland and from England follow this spring but it is odds on non-qualification, which at least will give coach Hristo Bonev time to sort out his squad in time for the World Cup 2002 qualifying matches.

Bob Vaughan

POLAND

Nowak takes over

DURING the winter break attention has been focused on the business side of football. Former international midfielder Piotr Nowak, who won the MLS title with Chicago Fire last year, bought control of Second Division Aluminium Konin and became chairman. However, he will play for Fire again in the 1999 season.

Aluminium have not been in the Premier Division yet, but were Polish Cup runners-up in 1998. At halfway this season they led their group of the Second Division with 27 points from 13 games.

Other clubs are much less well off than Aluminium. Pogon Szczecin, 14th in the Premier League, had to sell their best player, 25-year-old striker Olgierd Moskalewicz, to stave off bankruptcy.

Moskalewicz joined Wisla Krakow, leaders after the first part of the season and favourites to win the championship. They have 40 points from 15 games, 10 clear of Lech Poznan. But more important for Wisla is that Tele-Fonika, their main sponsor, did not withdraw their backing. There had been a suggestion that they would do this because Wisla were banned from European competition for a year after a knife was thrown at Parma's Dino Baggio during the UEFA game.

The Polish FA have promised to give £600,000 to the national team if they get to Euro 2000. "I am quite satisfied, but I suppose that my players will not be," said coach Janusz Wojcik.

Darius Kurowski

YUGOSLAVIA

Savicevic has revival

THE GOOD NEWS for supporters is that Dejan Savicevic is back in Yugoslavia – and back in the national team.

The old year ended with a 2-0 defeat in a friendly game against Israel, and the main reason for that disappointing result was the absence of key players such as Stojkovic, Mijatovic, Jugovic, Mihajlovic, Jokanovic, Djorovic and Djukic.

The only positive aspect for coach Milan Zivadinovic was the solid performance of Savicevic, who had not played a single game since June 29.

Savicevic, now 32, had his contract with Milan terminated at the end of last season. He has spent five months recovering from injury, training alone, but he exploited the surprise chance given him by Zivadinovic. The second surprise came when he signed a six-month contract with his former club, Red Star Belgrade, currently only third in the table.

It is to be hoped that Savicevic, who has scored 20 goals in 52 internationals, will play an important role in the possibly decisive Euro 2000 qualifier against Croatia, on March 27 in Belgrade.

Vladimir Novak

ALBANIA

Birce back with a Cup surprise

BEJKUSH BIRCE is back on the coaching scene – and doing well with Teuta of Durres. Birce, former coach of the Albania national team, joined Teuta after a spell as vice-president of the Albanian FA, and promptly led his new club to a remarkable victory over Dinamo in the second round of the Cup.

With a squad reinforced by several signings – including goalkeeper Kapllani of Dinamo, defenders Tole (Partizani) and Daiu (Besa), and striker Stojku of Elbasani – Teuta drew 0-0 with Dinamo in Tirana and then won 5-1 in Durres.

"The team is already shaping well," said an excited Birce.

The case of Auron Miloti has caused much comment. Last year he moved from Tirana to Vllaznia, but later asked if he could go back. Vllaznia claimed he had signed a one-year deal – but Miloti denied it and claimed the signature on the contract was a forgery. If the AFF cannot resolve the matter, it may go to court.

Gezim Nushi

Metal man...Aluminium's Piotr Nowak

Pro-file Miroslaw Trzeciak

Striking star of Poland's resurgence

ALARM BELLS should already be ringing in the England camp. If Glenn Hoddle's side are to put their Euro 2000 qualification campaign back on track when Poland come to Wembley at the end of March, they will have to give priority to shackling key striker Miroslaw Trzeciak.

The Poles have consistently been found wanting in their repeated clashes with England in recent times. But all bad runs have to end eventually and Trzeciak, Poland's newly-elected Footballer of the Year, could be the catalyst for a reversal of fortunes.

Currently top of Group 5 following an impressive 3-0 victory in Bulgaria and another win by the same margin at home to Luxembourg, Poland have shown clear signs this season that they are emerging from the doldrums. One of the obvious reasons for this has been the partnership up front of Trzeciak and Sylwester Czereszewski. A goal from Trzeciak sealed victory against Luxembourg and both were in fine fettle in Bulgaria, with the powerful and opportunistic Czereszewski scoring twice and Trzeciak proving the ideal foil with his intelligent off-the-ball running and technical ability.

"It's still early days but we are making important strides," says 30-year-old Trzeciak, who plays for Osasuna in the Spanish Second Division. "People have become used to writing Poland off, so it's been very pleasant to show that we do know how to play. Our confidence is high but we aren't under any illusions that the real test will be the trip to England."

Trzeciak has taken his time to find any sort of reward in the international arena. He made his debut in a friendly with Sweden in Gdansk in August 1991, but subsequently was afforded few opportunities to prove his worth and became a forgotten man for six seasons.

As a star of three championship-winning campaigns with Lech Poznan, Trzeciak had the right to expect far better treatment, though it is also true that his case was not helped by a miserable spell at Young Boys of Berne. However, his prospects improved markedly on returning home in the mid-1990s. A quick pit stop at Lech Poznan was followed by a move to LKS Lodz, where the goals flowed freely. The reward for finishing as Poland's top scorer in 1996-97 with 18 goals was an international recall, and last season Trzeciak was again much to the fore, helping LKS pick up their first League title since 1958.

There was plenty of speculation that he was on his way back to Lech Poznan. Yet, ultimately, he jumped at the chance to live and play in Spain with Osasuna. After his time in the shadows, the sun has begun to shine on Trzeciak in more ways than one.

Nick Bidwell

Club Osasuna (Spa)
Country Poland
Born April 11, 1968, in Koszalin
Previous clubs Gwardia Koszalin, Lech Poznan, Young Boys (Swi), Lech Poznan, LKS Lodz
International debut August 1991, v Sweden
International caps 8 (2 goals)
Honours Polish League 1990, 1992, 1993 (Lech), 1998 (LKS Lodz); Polish Cup 1988 (Lech)

Full stretch...Freddy Rincon of Corinthians halts Muller during the deciding match of the Brazilian championship

Corinthians take the glory

BRAZIL

Brian Homewood on the new champions of Brazil

CORINTHIANS, led by their superb Paraguayan captain Carlos Gamarra, overcame a tiff between manager Vanderley Luxemburgo and star player Marcelinho Carioca to win the Brazilian championship for the second time.

Gamarra, who took over as captain after Marcelinho was stripped of the armband for repeated bad behaviour, was voted the championship's best player for his exemplary defending. In a country where many coaches feel it is acceptable for defenders to hack down opposing forwards, Gamarra's flawless timing and clean tackling were the highlights of his club's campaign.

Corinthians, from Sao Paulo, claimed the title after beating Cruzeiro of Belo Horizonte in the three-match Final, which was only fair: they had won the first stage while their opponents finished seventh.

Ties from the quarter-finals onwards were played over three games and were decided: 1) on points; 2) on goal aggregate; and 3) on first-stage records. The team with the better opening record also got to play the second and third legs at home. In the first stage, the 24 teams played each other once, with the top eight qualifying and the bottom four going down.

Freddy Rincon and Edilson were the other heroes for Corinthians. Rincon, after the frustration of another flat Colombian World Cup campaign, returned to play some of the best football of his career, while Edilson, in attack, recovered the form that had earned him a place in the Brazil team in 1993.

Despite the eventual success, Corinthians had not been without their problems. Marcelinho Carioca was twice banished from the team and forced to train alone after falling foul of Luxemburgo. His second, lengthier spell in the cold ended only when he apologised to the team. Even so, Marcelinho, also banished from the Brazil squad by Luxemburgo, still finished as Corinthians' top scorer with 18 goals.

Edilson began the year in a police station after fighting outside a restaurant with an officer, who had told him to move his car. This was followed by a scare when it was thought he had contracted dengue fever – thankfully, it turned out to be just a severe bout of flu. Right-back Indio, the only pure-blooded Indian playing regular top-class football in the country, struggled to adapt to life in one of the world's biggest cities but became a regular in the knockout stages following an injury to Rodrigo.

Luxemburgo, who has now won three Brazilian championships, had to overcome the obvious wear and tear caused by splitting himself between Corinthians and his new job in charge of the national team. He has now finally decided to concentrate on Brazil but appears likely to keep a foot in the door at Corinthians by becoming a special adviser to his successor, as yet unnamed.

The career of Dinei, the substitute striker who turned out to be the hero of the Final, looked finished less than two years ago after he tested positive for cocaine. During his time out of the game, Dinei underwent therapy. "The best thing that happened to me was to fail that dope test," he says, "otherwise, I would still be using drugs today. I lost two years of my life because of them. I hit the bottom of the pit, but today I'm free."

He had been having an indifferent season until the Final. In the first leg, he went on as a half-time substitute to score one goal and set up the other. He then made Corinthians' goal in the second leg and both in the final match.

Cruzeiro, playing at home in the first leg, got off to a great start when Muller, a survivor from Brazil's 1986 World Cup team, and Valdo, the former Paris Saint-Germain player and a survivor from Italia 90, put them two ahead. But Corinthians hit back to force a 2-2 draw through Dinei and Marcelinho Carioca.

The second leg also ended in a draw, 1-1, leaving Corinthians needing only to draw the final match. Bizarrely, as reported last month, this was played on a Wednesday afternoon to avoid a clash with a televised Christmas special for children being shown by Globo, who hold the rights to the championship. But the timing did not affect Corinthians, who duly won the third and final game 2-0 to take the title.

● Brazil's 1998 World Cup coach, Mario Zagallo, has joined Portuguesa of Sao Paulo, and another former World Cup coach, Carlos Alberto Parreira, has taken over at Fluminense, now wallowing in the Third Division.

Ivan the incredible

IT'S NOT very often that Ecuador makes footballing headlines but the emergence of Ivan Kaviedes and his 43 goals scored in a single season has caused heads to turn and, in the case of Italians Perugia, Kaviedes' new club, chequebooks to be reached for.

The 21-year-old established himself as hot property when in his first full professional season, with championship runners-up Emelec, he outpaced forwards from around the world to be named the world's best top division goalscorer of 1998 by the IFFHS (International Federation of Football History & Statistics).

The organisation took into consideration scorers from the 50 most important leagues from all six continents and Kaviedes led the pack by six goals from Masashi Nakayama of Japan's Jubilo Iwata and Colombian Victor Bonilla from Deportivo Cali.

His total also beat the existing Ecuadorian record of 36, established by Deportivo Cuenca's Angel Liciardi in 1975.

Even if you question the standard of football in Ecuador, 43 goals in First Division football is a feat seldom witnessed. Kaviedes averaged exactly a goal a game, having missed three of Emelec's 46 championship games. Moreover, only four of his goals came from penalties.

Last year proved busy for Kaviedes since he also made his international debut in the 5-1 defeat by Brazil in October. Then came the move to Serie A with Perugia.

Yet while Kaviedes is starting to reap the rewards of his success, life has not always been easy. Born in the agricultural city of Santo Domingo de los Colorados, he was orphaned at six when his parents were killed in a road accident and was raised by his grandparents on their farm. Football became his life and he spent hours alone practising his skills. Now his dedication has paid off.

Needless to say, Italy will be a real test for Kaviedes, both on and off the pitch, but the softly-spoken player has an old head on young shoulders. He knows he will be a standard-bearer as the first Ecuadorian to appear in a major European league. He also knows that it will take the same dedication shown during his childhood to make it in Serie A.

Lesley Dickens

Blooming come back

BLOOMING, the Santa Cruz team with the strange name, are Bolivian champions for the first time in 14 years.

They have had a long list of players and coaches as well as ups and downs, with a financial crisis leading to relegation in 1995. But in the following year they won 23 of their 24 matches in the amateur division, which took them back into the professional league.

Blooming bought some top players, paid high salaries (by local standards) and finished third in their first year back. Still more changes followed among the playing staff, there is a new coach – Carlos Aragones – and even a different

club president, but change has brought success.

Blooming were third in the opening championship, won the closing championship, and then won the final round, for which big clubs such as champions Bolivar, The Strongest and Oriente Petrolero failed to qualify.

Blooming's hero this season is veteran international and club captain Victor Hugo Antelo, who is on the way to 400 career goals. Apart from his role as a creator, he scored a record 18 goals in 12 final-round matches.

Other leading players are goalkeeper Jose Fernandez, Argentinian defender Cesar Couceiro, midfielders Ruben Tufino and Raul Justiniano, and striker Limbert Gutierrez.

Blooming's next objective is to win the Libertadores Cup for Bolivia for the first time, but they are probably not quite up to that.

Eric Weil

Too many trophies

THE ALREADY overburdened fixture list of many clubs seems to be stretched beyond reasonable limits with the new Mercosur and Merconorte Cups, in spite of the big cash prizes in these TV-sponsored tournaments.

The Mercosur, contested by the 20 most popular clubs from Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, paid out around £14million in prizes, which increased in every round. In spite of this, many clubs frequently lined up reserves and gates were low.

Boca Juniors (Argentina) and Vasco da Gama (Brazil) played with reserve teams all through the tournament. Boca were concentrating on winning their domestic title, while Vasco were playing in the final stages of the Libertadores Cup and trying to qualify for the final round of the Brazilian championship (which they failed to do).

Many clubs paid more attention to their domestic championships, then in their final stages, but not the two Brazilian finalists, Palmeiras and Cruzeiro.

Palmeiras, with Paraguayan international defender Francisco Arce outstanding, deservedly won after two drawn games, but Cruzeiro, whom they had also beaten in the Brazilian Cup Final (and who lost in the Brazilian national championship Final a few days earlier) had by then played over 80 games in the year.

The Mercosur Cup did not generate the expected interest. A clash between popular Rio club Flamengo and then-Argentina champions Velez Sarsfield drew only 396 spectators to the giant Maracana stadium. There were hardly any five-figure crowds and many barely over 1,000.

It was the same story in the Merconorte Cup, which offered slightly lower prizes and brought together the 12 most popular clubs of Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela. The all-Colombian Final, between eventual winners Nacional and Deportivo Cali, drew only 6,000 for the deciding second leg, in which Cali fielded a reserve team.

The Libertadores Cup started in 1960 and took several years to catch general interest, but one factor conspiring against these new trophies is that participants are hand-picked and do not have to qualify. The TV sponsors have a 10-year contract and the tournaments will be staged again this year, but there may be some changes in the participants.

Eric Weil

1999 draws

Copa America

First round
Group A:
Paraguay, Peru, Japan, Bolivia.
Group B:
Brazil (champions), Chile, Mexico, Venezuela.
Group C:
Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, Uruguay.

To be held in Paraguay from June 29 to July 18. Top two from each group and the two third-placed teams with the best records qualify for the eight-team knockout stage.

Libertadores Cup

Group 1:
Nacional (Uru), Bella Vista (Uru), Monterrey (Mex), Estudiantes (Ven).
Group 2:
River Plate (Arg), Velez Sarsfield (Arg), Deportivo Cali (Col), Once Caldas (Col).
Group 3:
Palmeiras (Bra), Corinthians (Bra), Olimpia (Par), Cerro Porteno (Par).
Group 4:
Universitario (Peru), Sporting Cristal (Peru), Colo Colo (Chl), Universidad Catolica (Chl).
Group 5:
Wilsterman (Bol), Blooming (Bol), Emelec (Ecu), Liga Deportivo Universitario de Quito (Ecu).

Round robin, home and away. Top three from each group qualify for the two-legged knockout stage, to which defending champions Vasco da Gama (Bra) have a bye.

IN BRIEF

Liga cut loose

EMELEC, playing at home, won the first leg of ECUADOR'S national Final, played between the winners of the opening and closing tournaments. They were still level on aggregate halfway through the second leg. Then the roof fell in.

Liga Universitario de Quito scored four times in the first eight minutes of the second half, and went on to win 7-0, with Ulises de la Cruz grabbing a hat-trick.

Emelec cannot blame the altitude in Quito (2,800 metres), nor the 50,000 crowd, nor even the dismissal of two of their players. They were simply outclassed.

Liga's Brazilian coach, Paulo Massa, has now won the title twice in three seasons, having led El Nacional to the 1996 championship.

Lesley Dickens

IN CHILE, Universidad Catolica have qualified to join champions Colo Colo in the Libertadores Cup. They did so by beating Universidad de Chile 4-2 on penalties after two 0-0 draws in the Final of a four-team tournament between the teams placed second to fifth.

IN PERU, Universitario won the title by beating Sporting Cristal 4-2 on penalties after each team had won one leg of the title play-off between the opening and closing championship winners. Universitario were coached by Argentinian Osvaldo Piazza (ex-Velez Sarsfield).

Eric Weil

Men in the news

Palermo tops the poll

MARTIN PALERMO of Boca Juniors, top scorer in this season's Argentinian opening championship, was named as America's Player of the Year in the closest finish in the 13 years of the annual poll, organised by Uruguayan newspaper *El Pais*. He beat Paraguay's Carlos Gamarra by three votes in a ballot of 300 journalists from 56 countries.

CARLOS BIANCHI, also with Boca, was named top coach, and the following All-Star American selection was chosen: Jose Luis Chilavert (Par), Francisco Arce (Par), Jorge Bermudez (Col), Carlos Gamarra (Par), Felipe (Bra), Diego Cagna (Arg), Mauricio Serna (Col), Marcelinho Carioca (Bra), Marcelo Gallardo (Arg), Martin Palermo (Arg), Luis Hernandez (Mex).

MARCELO ESPINA, former captain of Argentina and now captain of Chilean champions Colo Colo, was named Chile's Player of the Year.

GABRIEL BATISTUTA, of Argentina and Fiorentina, was chosen as 1998's top player by Argentina's sportswriters.

HUGO DE LEON, the former Nacional defender who last season coached the club to its first Uruguayan championship in six years, has renewed his contract for another 12 months.

JULIO RIBAS, who coached Bella Vista in the Uruguayan League last season, has moved to Penarol. He succeeds Gregorio Perez, who resigned after the club failed to win the title for the first time in five years.

JAVIER ALVAREZ, named as Colombian national team coach while still coaching Once Caldas, does not want to leave the club, who will take part in the Libertadores Cup. Officials have proposed to the Colombian FA that he does both jobs at the same time.

Eric Weil

Goal machine...Palermo celebrates a hat-trick against Rosario Central

Big questions in the Big Apple

Paul Gardner on the troubled history of New York's MetroStars

UNITED STATES

THE FIRST THING that needs to be grasped about running a professional league in the USA is this: you must have a strong team in New York.

The team doesn't necessarily have to win everything in sight, but it has to exude vigour and excitement. A team that people talk about. A team that – not unlike New York City itself – is hated by the rest of the country.

Getting it right in the Big Apple is the key to success. In fact, such is the importance of New York City that the baseball, basketball, American football and ice hockey leagues all have two teams in the area. The so-called New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, that is.

All those leagues also have their offices in New York City. So, too, does Major League Soccer, where the bosses are well aware of the importance of doing well.

Aware of it – but at the same time, a little frightened of it. The fear goes back to the 1970s, when New York Cosmos were riding high in the old North American Soccer League. Cosmos – with their headquarters in the city but playing in New Jersey's Giants Stadium – were everything a New York franchise should be. The glamour team of the League all the others wanted to beat, and by far the most successful in drawing fans and getting the media's attention.

The problem was that the NASL went broke. Put out of business, according to many, by those spendthrift Cosmos. In an attempt to keep up with them – so goes the thinking – the other clubs in the League spent way beyond their means, and everybody ended up bankrupt.

A simple theory, but one that carries a lot of weight. The shadow of Cosmos, the dark side of Cosmos, seems to fall over the current operations of MLS – and, in particular, its New York-New Jersey team, MetroStars.

Of course, the basic way that the League operates – the single-entity structure – is supposed to ensure some sort of equality among its teams, as far as spending is concerned. Each team has to conform to the same salary cap, so however much money the owners have (and Metromedia, MetroStars' owners, have plenty), they can't spend beyond that limit on players.

But MetroStars seem to have taken the dreaded Cosmos warning far too seriously, and the result is a worrying situation for the League. Far from presenting a glamour team, Mets have managed so far to come up with three seasons of almost unrelenting tedium. A team that has yet to develop its own personality, and certainly a team that has totally failed to make any impression on the local fans.

The first MetroStars game, played in April 1996, drew more than 46,000 fans to Giants Stadium. They were fans who came to see a new team, who were willing to cough up to see players they didn't know too much about – and who were simply overjoyed to welcome professional soccer back to the area.

Three years later, when MetroStars ended last season with a vital play-off game that they had to win to stay in the championship race, the crowd was announced as 11,686, which sounded like an exaggeration to those who were in the stadium. Anyway, the figures brook no contradiction: the fans have been turned off, big time, by MetroStars' feeble performances.

Those fans are the most sophisticated in the USA. They know their soccer. Of course they want a winning team, but – not unlike Brazilian fans – they want their team to win by playing entertaining soccer.

In three seasons, MetroStars have never got beyond the first round of the play-offs. In 1997 they didn't even make the play-offs at all – and that was under World Cup-winning coach Carlos Alberto Parreira.

Coaches have been something of a problem. The team is now on its fifth – Bora Milutinovic, yet another with shining World Cup credentials. He was brought in last season, just as the play-offs started, as the man who was going to lead the team to glory. Far from it. He lost both play-off games, and MetroStars were sidelined yet again.

The logic is a bit tangled, but Milutinovic's failure led to him being hired as full-time coach – with all the usual publicity about how he was the right man for the job.

Milutinovic may not be the right man, despite the fact that he does have a lot of experience with American players. He was the national team coach in the 1994 World Cup, when he steered the USA into the second round. But that team won only one game. More significantly, they were a team who displayed the typical Milutinovic approach to soccer. In a word: caution. Attacking ideas almost seemed to be an afterthought.

The prospects for an exciting MetroStars season, then, are anything but good. Of course, it is never safe to guess what the wily Bora will do next. He has already created a stir by trading two defensive stalwarts – keeper Tony Meola and defender Alexi Lalas – to Kansas City Wizards.

Also banished are the team's top scorer Giovanni Savarese, to New England Revolution, and Chilean midfielder Marcelo Vega, to San Jose Clash. Another of the team's more enterprising players, Argentinian Diego Sonora, is also on his way out, 'not liked' by Milutinovic. So three of the team's more creative players have been dumped. Their replacements will be players, says general manager Charlie Stillitano, who "fit Bora's system".

Milutinovic's no-risk soccer is the very opposite of what goes down well here. Stillitano has also said – in something that sounds close to desperation – that what MetroStars fans need more than anything is a winning team. So, too, do the people who run MLS, to say nothing of the sponsors who back it.

A pro league without a strong New York franchise is a pro league in trouble. But a New York team – even a winning one – without style and swagger is not going to cut it in the Big Apple.

Gone west...Alexi Lalas (right)

MEXICO

Accent on attack in new season

IF THE new season in Mexico continues as it began, we should be in for plenty of excitement.

The 18 games played over the first two match days saw 60 goals scored – 3.3 per game – and average attendances of 25,000.

This is despite the fact that Necaxa, the team of the Nineties (three titles, two losing Finals, nine appearances in play-offs) are not attracting the number of fans that they did in the past.

Despite their success, Necaxa are treated badly by their bosses, the TV moguls of Televisa, who consider the club to be the least important of the three in Mexico City that they own. The other two, Atlante and America, get preferential treatment, but Necaxa, purely in football terms, are well ahead.

America, the so-called star in Televisa's crown, have not won a title since 1990. In the same period, They have had no fewer than 15 managers, including big names such as Secularac, Bielsa, Beenhakker, Solari, Jozic and Falcao.

Since 1984, when the three clubs came under the same management umbrella, 54 players have been transferred between them, usually without reference to the managers.

Perhaps the clubs in general are learning that you need patience to build a winning team. Despite the windfall of a pay-out from the World Cup pool, they are trying to save, and are increasing their efforts to groom more young players.

Three of the 18 clubs changed managers before the new season. One, Mexican Alberto Guerra, has moved from Leon to Toros Neza. The other two are with Televisa clubs – Angel Cappa, from Argentina, at Atlante, and Carlos Kiesse, a Paraguayan, at America.

Only one other manager is not of Mexican birth or extraction – Argentinian Roberto Saporiti of Pumas Unam.

There are 84 non-Mexican players from 16 countries, including Croatia, Yugoslavia and Spain, in the League.

Carlos Ramirez

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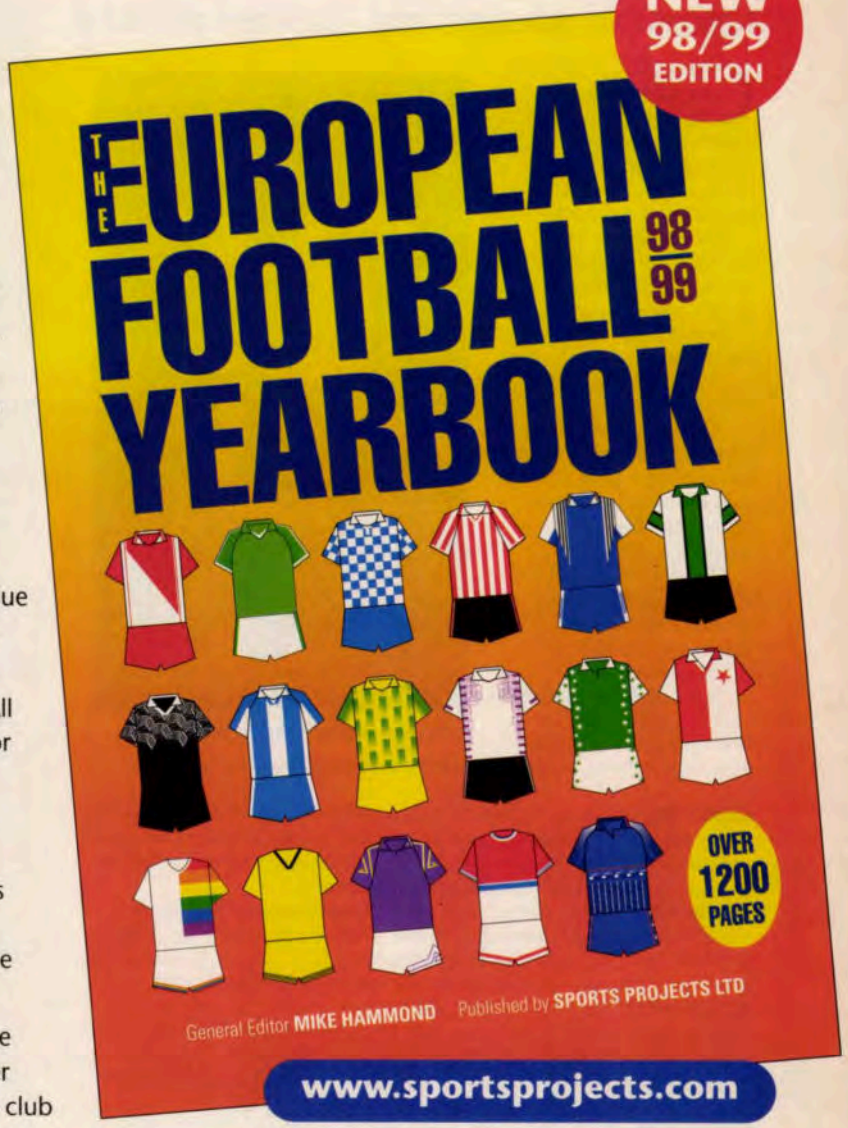

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Lions caught in trap

Nations Cup debutants hold Cameroon to a draw

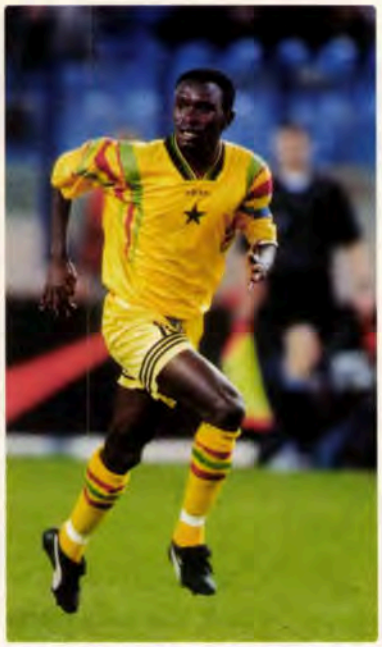
CAMEROON's embarrassing woes continued in the second round of African Nations Cup qualifiers, when they were humbled by a country playing their first official home international.

The Indomitable Lions, four times World Cup finals contenders, were held to a goalless draw in Eritrea – a sensational result for the tiny East African country, who were granted membership of FIFA only last year.

This was the first point for Eritrea in the competition, and for Cameroon, who have been in an administrative quagmire and recently were briefly suspended by FIFA.

The Lions had earlier lost 3-1 at home to Ghana – the first time they had lost a Nations Cup qualifying game on their own soil.

There was also an embarrassing result for South Africa, who surrendered a half-time lead to draw 1-1 in Mauritius, another of the perennial whipping boys in the competition.



Only goal...Ghana's Charles Akunnor

GROUP ONE: Ghana top the table after beating Mozambique with a single goal from Charles Akunnor but it was a disappointing scoreline for a side who have shown great progress since Guiseppe Dossena took over as coach. Ghana are the only team in the group with a 100 per cent record; Mozambique lie second.

GROUP TWO: Civil war in Sierra Leone caused the postponement of the match against Togo; in the other game Morocco drew 1-1 in Guinea. It was a good point for the Moroccans. Souleymane Oulare scored first for the home side but African Footballer of the Year Mustapha Hadji equalised in injury time at the end of the first half.

GROUP THREE: There was a second successive win for Ivory Coast, who had little trouble beating Namibia 3-0 in Abidjan, with two goals for Modibo Diallo and one for Ibrahima Diomande. Namibia, perhaps over-estimating their potential, played with only three at the back and were a goal down inside 60 seconds. Mali won a hard-fought point in Pointe Noire against Congo in the other match.

GROUP FOUR: Desire Periatambee made a welcome return for Mauritius, scoring the equaliser against South Africa. He was man of the match as the plucky islanders upstaged the South Africans, for whom Phil Masinga scored on the stroke of half-time. Angolan striker Akwa scored a hat-trick in their 3-1 home win over Gabon to register their first points. Akwa is the leading scorer in the event, with five.

GROUP FIVE: A first match in charge for Thijs Libregts but Nigeria's star-studded team were outplayed by Burundi in the first half and did not score until just before the break, through Garba Lawal. Finidi George added a second in the 70th minute. Senegal's woes continued as they dropped two points at home to Burkina Faso, despite taking the lead through captain Salif Keita. Romeo Kambou scored the equaliser.

GROUP SIX: Two late goals gave Zambia's makeshift team an unlikely win after Etienne Rado Rasanaiovo had put hosts Madagascar ahead. Subs Rotson Kilambe and Harry Milanzi scored for Zambia, who had coach Ben Bamfuchile in charge for the first time. In the other game, Italian regional league player Christian Kanyengele, who left his country as a refugee, returned to score twice and lead DR Congo to a 2-1 win over Kenya.

GROUP SEVEN: Algeria's troubles continued with a home defeat by neighbours Tunisia, for whom Faouzi Rouissi scored in the 44th minute. Moussa Saib, left out of the starting 11, has said he is no longer available for international duty. George Weah was the star for Liberia, who beat Uganda 2-0 in Monrovia. He set up both goals, for Zizi Roberts and George Jebrow.

Mark Gleeson

Equaliser...Hadji of Morocco

IN BRIEF

WEST AFRICA

THERE is confusion in two continents over the status of **SENEGAL**-born striker Khalilou Fadiga. He told Club Brugge last year that he would be interested in their offer to help him take up Belgian nationality, with an eye on playing for them at Euro 2000.

However, the player has subsequently denied that, telling reporters he still wants to play for Senegal in the African Nations Cup. Even so, the application for citizenship is going ahead.

Senegal fired coach Amsatou Fall after their 1-0 defeat by Burundi in a delayed Nations Cup qualifier in Bujumbura. He is to be replaced by Peter Schnittger, who had been working as technical director of the team. Schnittger has vast experience in West Africa, and his first two games in charge, against Guinea in back-to-back friendly internationals in Dakar, both ended in 1-0 victories.

NIGERIA's champions Shooting Stars won the West African Football Union Cup, beating JS Tenere of Niger 1-0 in the Final in Togo. This was the first time the tournament had been played at a neutral venue. In the semi-finals, Tenere upset defending champions USFA of Burkina Faso 2-0, and Stars beat Sabe de Bouna of Ivory Coast 3-2.

Jonathan Akonnor, 19, is to leave **GHANA's** Okwahu United to join elder brother Charles at VfL Wolfsburg in Germany. Ebo Mends, a former national coach, has taken a job with Dragons l'Oueme of Benin.

IVORY COAST skipper Tchiressoa Guel has completed his transfer from African champions ASEC Abidjan to Marseille.

BURKINA FASO beat Mali 1-0 and 4-2 in two home Nations Cup warm-up matches.

CENTRAL AFRICA

DYNAMO DOUALA beat favourites Canon Yaounde 1-0, with a 76th-minute goal from Edimo, to win the Cup in **CAMEROON**.

In **GABON**, the Cup Final was won by Mbilinga, who beat Ongo Sports 3-0. Veteran international Francois Amegasse was named Gabon's 1998 Footballer of the Year.

MALAWI international Ernest Mtawali has been given a free transfer by Toulouse.

ANGOLA striker Akwa has left Benfica to join Saudi side Al Shabab.

EAST AFRICA

ST GEORGE won the big **ETHIOPIA** derby 2-0 against Coffee FC, in front of a capacity crowd in Addis Ababa. That stretched their lead at the top of the table to three points over Awasa City. Coffee are a further two points back in third.

NORTH AFRICA

EIGHT SUPPORTERS died when the crowd stampeded into the ground to watch the match between Korum and Al Ittihad in **EGYPT**. Another 14 were seriously injured.

Zamalek have dismissed Dutch coach Ruud Krol after slipping further behind Al Ahli in the title race. Krol has now joined Al Wahda in the United Arab Emirates.

The Cairo-based Confederation of African Football (CAF) has signed a £20million contract with Swiss company ISL for the marketing and publicity rights for the next three African Nations Cup finals tournaments.

In **ALGERIA**, WA Tlemcen won the Arab Champions Cup, defeating hosts Al Shabab of Saudi Arabia 3-1.

Kawkab Marrakesh led the League in **MOROCCO** by two points from Raja Casablanca.

The Mohamed V stadium in Casablanca has been closed to matches after rioting at the Raja v Wydad derby, when 12 people were injured and 28 arrested.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

NAMIBIA's Nations Cup qualifier with Mali has been postponed from February 27 to May 8 at the request of the Malian federation.

The secretary-general of the Namibian federation, Barry Rukoro, has been suspended after crashing a car, donated by UEFA, while on a private jaunt in the country.

Ben Bamfuchile has taken over from Fighton Simukonda as coach of **ZAMBIA**.

Bruce Grobbelaar has been appointed coach of **SOUTH AFRICA's** Seven Stars, who are to amalgamate with city rivals Cape Town Spurs at the end of the season. They will be called Cape Town Ajax. Ajax Amsterdam have a 51 per cent stake in the new club. This is the first franchising agreement of its kind in football.

Manning Rangers have a seven-point lead over Kaizer Chiefs in the Premier League but Chiefs have two matches in hand.

South African international Steve Lekoelea,19, was arrested in Johannesburg and accused of driving a stolen car without a licence.

CONGO international Emeka Mamale has rejoined QwaQwa Stars in South Africa from Korean club Pohang Steelers.

Manzini Wanderers have a five-point lead over Royal Leopards in **SWAZILAND**.

Mark Gleeson

A cup full of chaos

Mohamed Chbaro reports on a problem for Asia 2000

THE ASIAN CUP, due to be played in October next year, may be staged in China instead of Lebanon because of problems arising from political upheaval in Beirut and the surrounding area.

The Asian Football Confederation will meet on February 12 to make a final decision on the destination of the tournament, which is the biggest international event in Asian football. The Chinese have already said they will be willing and able to host the event if Lebanon cannot or will not do so.

The Lebanese FA had been given the go-ahead to stage the 2000 event during the 1996 tournament, with the proviso that they had to build four new stadiums. These had to be of international standard and be located in the three main cities – Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon.

Plans for the tournament had been proceeding, but late last year Lebanon's new leader, Salim al-Hoss, decided that the re-shaping of an economy weakened by years of strife was more important than football, and vowed not to allow any more investment in the new grounds.

The government did suggest that the competition should be allowed to proceed with the use of only two stadiums – the recently completed International and Municipal stadiums in Beirut – instead of four. This suggestion will be discussed at the meeting on February 12, but it is unlikely to find favour: the tournament is due to have 16 teams, for the first time, with a consequent increase in fixtures.

Work has begun on the other two grounds, one in Tripoli, the other in Sidon, but they are only about 40 per cent complete. So China's chances of hosting the finals seem to be growing.

JAPAN

Flugels end on a high

YOKOHAMA FLUGELS bowed out in story-book fashion by winning the Emperor's Cup, Japan's equivalent of the FA Cup, beating Shimizu S-Pulse 2-1 in their last match ever.

Flugels, who folded after the withdrawal of a major sponsor and will merge with Yokohama Marinos next season, won their last nine games, four in the League and five in the Cup.

"It was an incredible match," said the club's German manager Gert Engels after the Cup thriller, "perhaps our best in all those six years [of the J.League].

"In Germany, sponsors flock in when a team wins the Cup. It's unthinkable for such a team to close down. I wanted to work with these players next year, too."

Flugels were outplayed in the first half of the Final by Steve Perryman's Shimizu S-Pulse and trailed to a diving header by Masaaki Sawanobori. But Yoshikiyo Kuboyama equalised just on half-time. The winner came in the 73rd minute when a pass from Cesar Sampaio put Takayuki Yoshida through to score.

Most of the Flugels have found new homes. Engels will manage JEF United next season; Seigo Narazaki and Motohiro Yamaguchi are moving to Nagoya Grampus Eight; and Cesar Sampaio seems likely to return to Brazil.

Jubilo Iwata striker Masashi Nakayama capped a memorable season by walking off with the Player of the Year title. The result was an almost foregone conclusion after Nakayama had scored a record 36 goals in 27 J.League outings this season, including four consecutive hat-tricks.

Shimizu's Ossie Ardiles was named Manager of the Year, Shinji Ono of Urawa Reds won Rookie of the Year and Leslie Mottram was Referee of the Year.

Mr Assist...Flugels' Cesar Sampaio

Kazuyoshi Miura is on the road again after Verdy Kawasaki decided to slash his salary. The 31-year-old has now agreed terms with Croatia Zagreb.

Foreign stars leaving the J.League at the end of this season include Dunga from Jubilo Iwata, Jorginho from Kashima Antlers, and Julio Salinas and Juan Goikoixea from Yokohama Marinos.

Consadole Sapporo lost the final play-offs against Avispa Fukuoka, 1-0 away and 3-0 at home, and will play in the new Second Division next season.

Under the new system, Division One will be played in two stages, of 15 games each, from March 6 to May 29 and from August 7 to November 27.

Division Two will have a single league format, from March 14 to November 21, with teams playing each other four times.

Division One: Kashima Antlers, JEF United, Kashiwa Reysol, Urawa Reds, Verdy Kawasaki, Yokohama F. Marinos, Bellmare Hiratsuka, Shimizu S-Pulse, Jubilo Iwata, Nagoya Grampus Eight, Kyoto Purple Sanga, Gamba Osaka, Cerezo Osaka, Vissel Kobe, Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Avispa Fukuoka.

Division Two: Consadole Sapporo, Vegalta Sendai, Montedio Yamagata, Omiya Ardija, FC Tokyo, Kawasaki Frontale, Ventforet Kofu, Albirex Niigata, Oita Football Club, Sagan Tosu.

Mike Plastow & Michi Ishijima

OCEANIA

Tournament in trouble

PREPARATIONS for the 1999 World Under-17 Championship have run into further trouble. The Championship has been bedevilled by problems; early last year FIFA took it away from New Zealand, only to re-allot it to the Kiwis a few months later.

The latest difficulty has been caused by a dispute over who should organise the event. Former New Zealand international Chris Turner claims he was given that right in September last year, however New Zealand Soccer (the national FA) now wants Bill McGowan to be in charge. McGowan was chief executive of the Auckland Warriors rugby league club until dismissed recently. The matter will be settled in the High Court.

Karembeu takes award

PREDICTABLY, Christian Karembeu has been voted the 1998 Oceania Footballer of the Year. During 1998, New Caledonian Karembeu won both the World Cup and the European Champions Cup. The next five places in the poll were all taken by England-based Australians – Mark Bosnich (the previous year's winner), Harry Kewell, Mark Schwarzer, Stan Lazaridis and John Aloisi. New Zealander Danny Hay, who would have joined Crewe Alexandra but for work permit problems, was seventh.

In the Oceania Best Player of the Century ballot, Karembeu had to be content with third place, behind New Zealand's Wynton Rufer and Frank Farina of Australia. Although just released, the poll was conducted before Karembeu's triumphs with Real Madrid and France last year.

OCEANIA IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA's early season pacesetters Perth Glory have dropped to fourth place in the Ericsson Cup following two successive home defeats. Holders South Melbourne are the current leaders, with Sydney United four points behind. Despite their good form, United are in such deep financial trouble they may not be able to complete their fixtures.

At the other end of the table, things have improved slightly for Canberra Cosmos. After opening with 13 successive defeats, they can now claim two draws.

ABDUL MANAAN, one of **FIJI's** greatest players, ended his career on a high when helping Raymonds win the Konica National Club Championship in Nadi. Manaan, 38, announced his retirement immediately after the Final, in which Raymonds beat Fiji Sugar Corporation in a penalty shoot-out after a 1-1 draw.

Paul Moon

ASIA IN BRIEF

Stars in Saudi

AL ITTIHAD of **SAUDI ARABIA** will host the 16th Gulf Co-operation Council club championship. The teams from Kuwait (Al Salmiya), the UAE (Sharjah), Qatar (Al Arabi), Bahrain (West Rifa'a), Oman (Oman SC), plus the host club, seem well matched, and it is not easy to predict the winner of this, the prime club championship in the Gulf.

Al Shabab added two notable signings just before starting the second half of the championship – Nigerian forward Rashidi Yekini and Kuwait midfield schemer Badr Hajji. Kuwait international Bashar Abdullah signed a three-year contract with Al Hilal, who also signed Tunisian international Ayyadial Al-Hamroun.

IRAN international Mehdi Mahdavikia has joined Bochum in Germany from Pirouzi, while Esteghlal central defender Javad Zarincheh is moving to Los Angeles Galaxy.

Dutchman Ruud Krol has replaced his compatriot Jo Bonfrere as coach of **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES** leaders Al Wahda. Bonfrere has signed with Al Ittihad of Qatar.

Al Jazira are Al Wahda's closest rivals. They narrowed the gap on the leaders after beating Al Sha'ab 5-1.

In **OMAN**, promoted Fanja are top following their 3-1 away win over hot favourites Al Seeb.

In **BAHRAIN**, West Rifa'a suffered their first defeat, losing 2-1 at Al Badih.

Mohamed Chbaro & Brian Langley

THE SEASON began well for promoted Tollygunge Agragami in **INDIA**. After four games, they led Group A by two points.

Sayed Nayeemuddin, chief coach to the national squad, has lost his job as a result of the team's poor performances in the Asian Games.

Bhasi Malaparamba

A FIERCE **MALAYSIA** Cup Final ended in victory for Perak, who beat Terengganu 5-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

Saravnan put Perak ahead from Khairul's free-kick, but Mohamed Noor equalised with a left-foot volley.

Azam Mahmood

Crossword

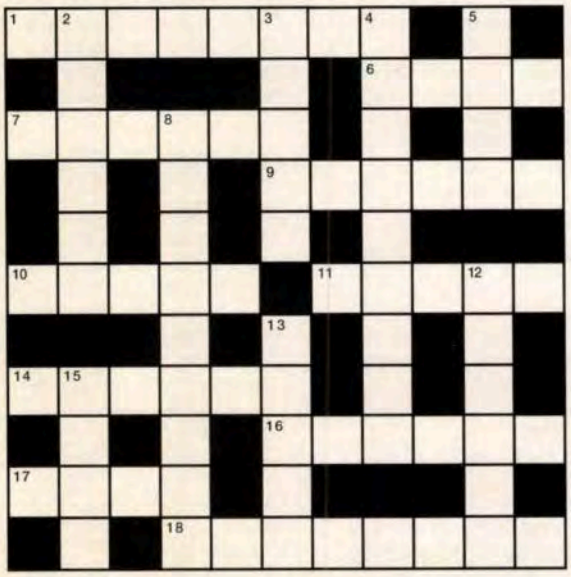
Win a Mitre Ultimax Fluo Flare – official match ball of the FA

Mitre have kindly donated an Ultimax Fluo Flare, the official match ball of the English Football Association, as first prize for this month's crossword. The first correct entry selected at random after February 22 will win the ball. Five runners-up will each win a copy of the book *Football Moods*, a photographic essay of the game.
SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: MARCH CROSSWORD, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford St, London SE1 9LS.

CLUES ACROSS
1 Hamburg striker recently restored to Russia's line-up (8)
6 1998 Double winners in Holland (4)
7 Reigning champions of the Czech Republic (6)
9 Ex-Espanyol winger who joined Atletico Madrid in 1997 (6)
10 £12m Chilean front man with Lazio (5)
11 Veteran skipper completing his final season at the Amsterdam Arena (5)
14 Dane formerly with Lyngby now contracted to Strasbourg (6)
16 Norway midfielder recruited to Celtic from Linz ASK (6)
17 Roma's Cameroon man previously with Lucchese (4)
18 Albanian League champions from Shkoder (8)

CLUES DOWN
2 Nigerian international forward with Monaco (6)
3 Former Partizan keeper of Porto and Yugoslavia (5)
4 Gifted forward prominent in Lens' Champions League campaign (9)
5 Teenager establishing himself as Barcelona's midfield anchorman (4)
8 Current coach with both Moscow Spartak and Russia (9)
12 South African defender in the Cagliari squad (6)
13 Swiss midfielder forced out of Euro 96 with a broken toe (5)
15 Injury-dogged Australian with Lazio (4)

FEBRUARY SOLUTION
ACROSS: 2 Milosevic, 6 Runje, 7 Negro, 9 Stoger, 10 Ilie, 12 Uche, 14 Magath, 17 Elber, 18 Csank, 19 Barcelona.
DOWN: 1 Karlsruhe, 2 Minto, 3 Lienen, 4 Song, 5 Vogel, 8 Okechukwu, 11 Falcao, 13 Haber, 15 Ayala, 16 Arce.



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Diary December 1998/January 1999

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

ENGLAND: Arsenal World Cup star Patrick Vieira is fined £20,000 by a disciplinary panel for making an obscene gesture at Sheffield Wednesday fans.
HOLLAND: Dutch champions Ajax prepare terms for a transfer and development co-operation agreement with Belgium's Germinal Ekeren.
UNITED STATES: Midfielder Cobi Jones is voted Player of the Year.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

ENGLAND: FA chief executive Graham Kelly resigns after he and chairman Keith Wiseman are the subject of unanimous no-confidence votes by the executive committee.
GERMANY: Franz Beckenbauer is appointed president of the 2006 World Cup bid committee.
ITALY: Former England forward David Platt is named coach of Sampdoria to replace sacked Luciano Spalletti.
ROMANIA: Rapid Bucharest, having lost Mircea Lucescu to Inter, appoint Dumitru Dumitriu as coach until the end of the season.
THAILAND: The Asian confederation, meeting in Bangkok, give FIFA until March to avert a boycott of the 2002 World Cup in the row over qualifying place allocations.
ZIMBABWE: The ZFA appoint Dutchman Clements Westerhof as national coach. Westerhof guided Nigeria to the 1994 World Cup finals.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

ACTION: Benni McCarthy scores both goals as South Africa beat Egypt 2-1 in coach Trott Moloto's first official game in charge…Italy beat a World XI 6-2 in a match to celebrate the centenary of the federation…Cruzeiro beat Palmeiras 2-1 in the first leg of the Mercosur Cup Final.
FRANCE: Marseille become the first French club to launch their own television channel.
GERMANY: The DFB launch a foundation against violence in football which will be named after Daniel Nivel, the French gendarme attacked by German hooligans at France 98.
ITALY: Antonio Matarrese, a UEFA vice-president and former head of the Italian federation, is warned that he is being investigated in connection with the dope-test scandal.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

ITALY: Federation president Luciano Nizzola becomes the latest sports official placed under investigation in the doping scandal…Gabriel Batistuta says he will stay with League leaders Fiorentina through to 2003.

Vote winner…Cobi Jones

SWITZERLAND: Champions Grasshopper sack coach Rolf Fringer.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

CHILE: Nelson Acosta agrees a new contract to coach the national team through to the 2002 World Cup finals.
ENGLAND: FA chairman Keith Wiseman says he sanctioned the grant to the Welsh FA in return for support in his bid to overthrow David Will as FIFA vice-president.
HUNGARY: Ferencvaros sack coach Tibor Nyilasi.
ITALY: The federation warn Sampdoria that David Platt must not be employed in the formal capacity of coach.
RUSSIA: Anatoli Byshovets is dismissed as national coach after six matches and less than five months in charge.
SENEGAL: National coach Amsatou Fall is sacked in the wake of the African Nations Cup defeat by Burundi.
SPAIN: Europe's so-called G-14 group of top clubs vote at a meeting in Madrid to support UEFA's redevelopment of the Champions League.
THAILAND: Federation officials confirm they will back England's 2006 World Cup bid because of the FA's help in finding and funding national coach Peter Withe.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

ACTION: At the Asian Games, Iran beat Kuwait 2-0 in the Final and China defeat hosts Thailand 3-0 for third place…Bayern Munich extend their lead in Germany to eight points by defeating Wolfsburg 3-0.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

ACTION: In Holland, Kees Van Wonderen's 72nd-minute equaliser earns leaders Feyenoord a 1-1 draw at home to Ajax.
RUSSIA: Police charge a man with the acid attack on Rotor Volgograd striker Oleg Veretennikov and his daughter.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

FRANCE: Zinedine Zidane is voted European Footballer of the Year by *France Football* magazine, polling 244 points, followed by Davor Suker (68), Ronaldo (66) and Michael Owen (51).
GERMANY: National coach Erich Ribbeck calls up Michael Preetz of Hertha Berlin and Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder Bernd Schneider to his 26-man squad for friendlies in the United States in February.
PORTUGAL: Vitoria Guimaraes dismiss Yugoslav coach Zoran Filipovic.
SPAIN: Tenerife sack coach Juan Manuel Lillo.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA decide that only women referees will be used for the Women's World Cup.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

ACTION: In Spain, Catalonia beat Nigeria 5-0, Euskadi (Basque Region) beat Uruguay 5-1, Andalucia beat a Foreigners XI 2-0 and the Canary Islands defeat Latvia 1-0.
BELGIUM: The federation confirm they will pay Jean-Marc Bosman £300,000 in an

Pay-out...Jean-Marc Bosman

out-of-court settlement of his legal costs claim following his historic court victory.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain replace Charles Bietry as chief executive with finance director Laurent Perpere.
GERMANY: The DFB confirm they will send the national team to the Confederations Cup in place of France.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

ACTION: Israel beat Yugoslavia 2-0 in a friendly in Tel Aviv.
BRAZIL: Corinthians win the Brazilian championship by beating Cruzeiro 2-0 in the final play-off game.
COLOMBIA: New national coach Javier Alvarez recalls Faustino Asprilla – who was banished midway through the World Cup finals – for a friendly against Denmark.
GEORGIA: Temuri Ketsbaia quits the national team in a row with coach Vladimir Gutsayev.
SWITZERLAND: Brazil are top of FIFA's world rankings, with France second.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

BELGIUM: Lommel sack coach Leo Clijsters after slipping into the relegation zone.
CHILE: Universidad Catolica qualify for the Libertadores Cup by beating Universidad de Chile 4-2 on penalties after a 0-0 draw.
ECUADOR: Ivan Kaviedes scores his 43rd goal of the national championship to give Emelec a 1-0 win at home to LDU Quito in the first leg of the Final.
SPAIN: Fans cause more than £130,000 of damage to the Montjuic Olympic stadium in Barcelona after Catalonia's 5-0 thrashing of Nigeria.
SWAZILAND: Local police are warned they face a pay cut to help subsidise the participation of the police team, Royal Leopards, in the CAF Cup.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

GUATEMALA: Carlos Bilardo, Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning coach, confirms he is no longer national team director. New manager is Benjamin Monterrosa, a former star midfielder with top club Municipal.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

SPAIN: Carlos Aimar is appointed coach of Tenerife in place of sacked Juan Manuel Lillo. Aimar had been coaching Santa Fe in his native Argentina.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28

BULGARIA: Sporting Lisbon midfielder Ivailo Yordanov is voted Bulgaria's Footballer of the Year.
CAMEROON: Dynamo Douala beat Canon Yaounde 1-0 in the Cup Final.
RUSSIA: Oleg Romantsev, coach of Moscow Spartak, is reappointed national coach for the second time, in succession to sacked Anatoli Byshovets.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil is found guilty by a Madrid court of defaming Barcelona president Jose Luis Nunez. The fine has yet to be determined.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29

ACTION: Palmeiras win the Mercosur Cup by beating Cruzeiro 1-0 in a final play-off. Cruzeiro won the first leg 2-1, Palmeiras won the second leg 3-1.
BRAZIL: Mario Zagallo becomes coach of Portuguesa...Corinthians' Paraguay defender Carlos Gamarra is voted top player in the national championship.
HONG KONG: A police sergeant and seven other men are arrested and charged with fixing local and international matches between June 1997 and June 1998.
ITALY: Roma and Lazio are fined for racist graffiti at the Stadio Olimpico...Roma coach Zdenek Zeman is fined £5,000 by a disciplinary commission for questioning the credibility of the referee match selection system.
UGANDA: International Majid Musisi, of Turkish club Dardanelspor, is fined £550 after 10 charges were brought against him arising from two accidents in which a cyclist died and four people were injured.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

GREECE: Weekend fixtures are called off after the clubs in the top three divisions announce they are striking in protest at the state pools' failure to pay them last season's money.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31

BELGIUM: Lokeren buy into Second Division Sint-Niklaas to be their nursery side.
FRANCE: *L'Equipe* names its Ideal XI of 1998: Barthez – Thuram, Blanc, F De Boer, Roberto Carlos – Zidane, Petit, Davids, Rivaldo – Batistuta, Ronaldo.
SPAIN: Midfielder Savio complains that Real Madrid have fined him £7,000 for returning late from Brazil even though he was delayed by unavoidable problems with his son's passport...bullfighters Enrique Ponce and Jose Tomas play for Real and Atletico in a charity match to raise funds for victims of the Central American hurricane. Atletico win 2-0 with goals from Fresnedoso and Valeron.
UNITED STATES: Paul Caligiuri returns to Los Angeles Galaxy after missing most of the 1998 season because of a contract dispute.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 1999

BELGIUM: Lommel appoint Jos Daerden as coach in succession to Leo Clijsters.
GERMANY: Promotion-seeking Greuther Furth sign Slovak international Jocef Kozleh – then loan him back to FC Kosice until the end of the season.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

ACTION: Ugandan champions SC Villa thrash KMKM of Zanzibar 5-0 in the opening game of the East and Central African Club Championship.
ENGLAND: Graham Kelly admits receiving a special-rates loan from the Football Association.
ITALY: Torino goalkeeper Luca Bucci is ruled out for two months after breaking a bone in a hand in training.
SPAIN: Real Madrid coach Guus Hiddink shaves off his moustache – as he had promised to do if Madrid won the World Club Cup.
URUGUAY: *El Pais'* American Footballer of the Year poll is won by Boca Juniors striker Martin Palermo with 73 votes followed by Carlos Gamarra (Paraguay and Corinthians) and Jose Luis Chilavert (Paraguay and Velez Sarsfield).
YUGOSLAVIA: Real Madrid forward Predrag Mijatovic is named Yugoslav

Super Slav...Predrag Mijatovic

Footballer of the Year with 36 votes, ahead of Lazio sweeper Sinisa Mihajlovic.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3

ARGENTINA: Union Santa Fe appoint Salvador Capitano as coach in succession to Mario Nicasio Zanabria. Capitano has won the Ecuadorian championship three times, with Emelec in 1993 and Barcelona in 1994 and 1995.
SPAIN: Leaders Mallorca lose 1-0 away to Extremadura...Real Madrid announce the launch of their own pay-TV channel, Canal Madrid.

MONDAY, JANUARY 4

AUSTRIA: Ex-international midfielder Kurt Jara is appointed coach of Tirol Innsbruck in place of Frantisek Cipro.
BELGIUM: Michel D'Hooghe, president of FIFA's medical committee, says the world federation will resist the International Olympic Committee's bid to impose minimum two-year bans on all dope-cheat sportsmen.
CAMEROON: Cameroon are suspended by FIFA after the Sports Ministry fails to produce credible proposals for the interim executive needed to fill the void left by FIFA's dissolution of the federation.
ENGLAND: Keith Wiseman resigns as chairman of the FA after the full council hears his version of the votes-for-cash saga.
HOLLAND: Fritz Korbach, dismissed coach of De Graafschap, is fined £350 by

the KNVB for criticising a referee after the 2-2 draw with Willem II in November.
SPAIN: Ex-Germany goalkeeper Bodo Illgner signs a new three-year contract with Real Madrid...Santander sack coach Nando Yosu; technical director Miguel Sanchez steps in as caretaker...Salamanca dismiss trainer Miguel Angel Russo.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA say eight countries applied to host the 2006 World Cup finals before the December 31 deadline – Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, England and Germany...FIFA president Sepp Blatter says he would like a special World Cup tournament to be staged in 2004 to celebrate the governing body's centenary. He also reaffirms his commitment to staging a World Cup every two years.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

ACTION: Holders Argentina open their defence of the South American Youth Cup by defeating Venezuela 4-1, while Chile beat Ecuador 2-0.
ENGLAND: Nottingham Forest dismiss manager Dave Bassett.

Off again...Juve's Paolo Montero

SPAIN: Betis suspend late-arriving Paraguayan World Cup defender Celso Alaya for a month.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

ENGLAND: The Premier League hopes to mike up some of its referees and linesmen in a communication experiment next season.
GERMANY: Essen prosecutors say four Germans will stand trial for attempted murder and grievous bodily harm following the beating of French gendarme Daniel Nivel during France 98.
JAPAN: The JFA signs a five-year sponsorship deal with Adidas.
NORWAY: Chelsea's Norway striker Tore Andre Flo is ruled out for six weeks after an ankle operation.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA president Sepp Blatter promises that the World Cup will not be held in the same year as the Olympic Games.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

ACTION: Kenyan champions AFC Leopards are knocked out of the East and Central African Club Championship, after losing 1-0 to Kivoyu Sport of Rwanda in the first round.
BRAZIL: Former World Cup-winning captain Carlos Alberto Torres quits as coach of Atletico Mineiro after a row with director of football Toninho Cerezo.
ITALY: Juventus' Uruguayan defender Paolo Montero becomes the man sent off most in Serie A following a red card in the 1-1 draw with Milan – his 12th in eight seasons in Italy. He eclipses Inter veteran Giuseppe Bergomi, sent off 11 times.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil is jailed on fraud charges concerning allegations that he illegally channelled £2million from Marbella council funds into the club...former international midfielder Andoni Goikoetxea is persuaded to come out of short-lived retirement by Osasuna.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA president Lennart Johansson warns that Europe may pull out of the World Cup altogether if FIFA insist on staging it every two years.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

CAMEROON: A plea from Prime Minister Peter Musonge Mafany is rewarded as FIFA lift their suspension on Cameroon.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

BRAZIL: The Sao Paulo federation will fine players £140 and £280 for each yellow and red card respectively rather than impose suspensions in the 1999 state championship.
FRANCE: In the League Cup first round, holders Paris Saint-Germain beat Saint-Etienne 1-0, while Bordeaux go out 1-0 to Le Havre.
GHANA: Ghanaian officials propose mounting a joint, five-country African bid to host the 2006 World Cup finals.
SPAIN: Barcelona coach Louis Van Gaal drops Brazilian striker Giovanni from the squad to face Bilbao after the player's public complaint that he is fed up with being a reserve.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

ACTION: In France, Lens beat Marseille 6-5 on penalties in the League Cup after a 1-1 draw...in Portugal, Sporting Lisbon are beaten 3-2 by Second Division Gil Vicente in the Cup...Christian Vieri's second goal in five days sets Lazio on the way to a 2-0 win which knocks Fiorentina

Called up...Florian Maurice of France

off the top in Italy...Mallorca underline their Spanish title credentials by beating Real Madrid 2-1 in a game which sees Madrid veteran Manuel Sanchis sent off.
SOUTH AFRICA: Ex-Liverpool and Zimbabwe goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar is confirmed as new coach of Seven Stars.
UGANDA: Senior internationals are threatened with indefinite suspension unless they return kit issued to them for a trip to Austria last year.

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

ENGLAND: Ron Atkinson is appointed manager of Nottingham Forest.
FRANCE: Roger Lemerre calls up Marseille striker Florian Maurice for the friendly against Morocco.
ISRAEL: Umm el-Fahm is chosen for the January 22 tournament tie between Norway and Estonia – the first time Israel's Arab sector will host an international.
PORTUGAL: Chaves coach Horacio Goncalves resigns following the 2-0 Cup defeat by Torreense.
SOUTH AFRICA: Ajax Amsterdam buy a 51 per cent stake in Ajax Cape Town, a new club which will play in the Premier League next season. The club has been formed by merging Seven Stars and Cape Town Spurs.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

EGYPT: Eight fans are killed and 13 injured after a stampede at the Alexandria stadium before a Cup quarter-final between Al-Ittihad and Al-Koroum.
ENGLAND: Tottenham's German signing Steffen Freund says he has a get-out clause in his contract in case his family cannot settle in London...Wembley's £103m sale to an FA-backed consortium is completed.
FRANCE: World Cup organising president Michel Platini announces a France 98 pre-tax profit of £60m. Simultaneously, FIFA president Sepp Blatter says Platini will be his new head of development...Jean Tigana quits as coach of Monaco and is replaced by assistant Claude Puel.
GERMANY: Berti Vogts makes a well-received cameo appearance in a TV soap opera...the international soccer statisticians' federation names Pele as Player of the Century and Johan Cruyff as European Player of the Century.
GREECE: Clubs provisionally call off their strike in the pools cash row.
SCOTLAND: Celtic striker Marko Viduka is ordered off the club's flight to a Spanish training camp in the continuing storm over his transfer.
UGANDA: Sports Club Villa of Uganda beat Rwanda's Rayon Sport 2-0 to reach the final of the East and Central African Club Championship.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

BRAZIL: National coach Vanderley Luxemburgo quits as boss of national champions Corinthians.
FRANCE: Marseille appeal against their League Cup defeat by Lens. They claim video replays prove that Eric Roy's 'missed' spot-kick in the shoot-out crossed the line after bouncing down off the bar.
ITALY: Coach Delio Rossi, sacked by Salernitana, is reinstated after violent protests by fans.
SPAIN: Valladolid are deducted three points for fielding one too many non-EU players in a 2-1 win over Betis. The result is converted into a 3-0 defeat.

Compiled by Keir Radnedge

OBITUARIES

VITOR BAPTISTA, a former Portugal international, has died aged 50. Baptista made his name with Benfica in the 1970s and also played for Vitoria Setubal and Boavista.

LAJOS TICHY, team-mate of Ferenc Puskas in the great Honved side of the 1950s, has died in Budapest, aged 63. Tichy, renowned for a ferocious left-foot shot, was understudy to Puskas at Honved and then succeeded him in the national team after the Hungarian uprising of 1956.

Tichy scored 49 goals in 71 internationals, including four in the World Cup finals in 1958 and three in the 1962 finals in Chile. He amassed 247 goals in 320 championship matches for Honved, for whom he played between 1953 and 1971. He was League top scorer four times.

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World Service

Your complete guide to the month's stats and facts

INTERNATIONALS

Saturday, December 19

Bangkok – Asian Games Final
Iran 2 (Karimi Pashaki 6, Bagheri 26)
Kuwait 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Prion (Tha)
Iran: Shabani Golam – Mahdavikia, Zarincheh, Hamedani, Mosavi Hasanzad (Fekrijobari 63) – Bagheri (Mansourian 83), Estili, Mohammadkhani, Yazdani – Ali Daei, Karimi Pashaki.
Kuwait: Jamal Moubarak – Al Adel (Al Husaini 75), Al Shammari, Al Khodari, Al Harabeej – Laheeb, Al Mutali (Ben Haji 81), Al Azmi, Al Kandari – Al Othman (Khaled Shazadah 46), Al Jasem.

Bangkok - Asian Games 3rd place play-off
Thailand 0
China 3 (Fan Zhiyi 25, Wang Peng 66, Ma Mingyu 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000.

Wednesday, December 23

Casablanca – intl friendly
Morocco 4 (Naybet 30, Haddah 44, Bassir 61, A Ramzi 74)
Bulgaria 1 (Bachev 56)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** El Arjoune (Mor)
Morocco: Chadli – Saber, Naybet (Abrami), Neqrouz, El Hadrioui – Tahar El Khalej (Seliami), Chipo, Chiba (Rmouki), A Ramzi – Haddah, Rokki (Bassir).
Bulgaria: Ivankov (G Petkov 62) – I Stoyanov (Orachev 65), Kirilov, Zagorcic (V Yonkov 58), Guinchev, Naidenov – Z Yankov (S Petrov 52), Borimirov (Yovov 52), I Iliev – M Hristov (Gruiev 65), Stoichkov (Bachev 52).
/
Tel Aviv – intl friendly
Israel 2 (Tal 57, Abuksis 83)
Yugoslavia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Bosat (Tur)
Israel: Davidovitch – Alon Harazi, Ghrayib, Shelah, Ben-Shimon (Eitan Tal 46), Benado (Zeituni 46), Badeer (Benayoun 82), Revivo (Sivilia 82), Berkovic (Mizrahi 46), Ronen Harazi, Tikva (Abuksis 56).
Yugoslavia: Kralj (Ilic 83) – Komljenovic, Savic, D Stankovic (Gojkovic 77), Bunjevcevic, J Stankovic (Kovacevic 52), Drulovic (Djegovic 64), Savicevic (Djordjevic 52), Kovacevic (Marinovic 83), Grozdic, Milosevic (Sarac 33).
Sent off: Kovacevic 63min.

Sunday, January 3

Abidjan – intl friendly
Ivory Coast 3 (Konan Kan 19, Diallo Ahmed 32, 52)
Togo 1 (Noutsoudje pen 82)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 5,000

OTHER MATCHES

Dec 22: (*Barcelona*) Catalonia 5 (Oscar Garcia 4, 29, Celades 18, Raul Tamudo 83, Barbara 89) Nigeria 0; (San Sebastian): Euskadi (Basque Country) 5 (De Paula 50, Idiakez 51, Ziganda 67, 88, Urrutia 82) Uruguay 1 (Poyet 10);
Andalucia 2 Foreign Select XI 0;
Canary Islands 1 Latvia 0.
Dec 30: (*Valletta*) Malta 1 (Busuttil 4), Juventus 5 (Tacchinardi 28, Rignoni 40, 45, Amoruso pen 61, Perrotta 63).
Jan 8: (*Bizerte*) Tunisia 1 (Maher Kazari 80), Anderlecht 0.

EURO 2000

Group 1

05.09.98 .....Wales Italy 0-2
05.09.98 .....Belarus-Denmark 0-0
10.10.98 .....Italy-Switzerland 2-0
10.10.98 .....Denmark-Wales 1-2
14.10.98 .....Wales-Belarus 3-2
14.10.98 .....Switzerlan-Denmark 1-1
27.03.99 .....Belarus-Switzerland
27.03.99 .....Denmark-Italy
31.03.99 .....Switzerland-Wales
31.03.99 .....Italy-Belarus
05.06.99 .....Italy-Wales
05.06.99 .....Denmark-Belarus
08.06.99 .....Switzerland-Italy
08.06.99 .....Wales-Denmark
04.09.99 .....Belarus-Wales
04.09.99 .....Denmark-Switzerland
07.09.99 .....Switzerland-Belarus
07.09.99 .....Italy-Denmark
09.10.99 .....Wales-Switzerland
09.10.99 .....Belarus-Italy

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Wales	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Denmark	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Belarus	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Switzerland	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Group 2

05.09.98 .....Georgia-Albania 1-0
06.09.98 .....Greece-Slovenia 2-2
06.09.98 .....Norway-Latvia 1-3
10.10.98 .....Slovenia-Norway 1-2
10.10.98 .....Latvia-Georgia 1-0
14.10.98 .....Norway-Albania 2-2
14.10.98 .....Greece-Georgia 3-0
14.10.98 .....Slovenia-Latvia 1-0
18.11.98 .....Albania-Greece 0-0
27.03.99 .....Greece-Norway
27.03.99 .....Georgia-Slovenia
31.03.99 .....Slovenia-Albania
31.03.99 .....Latvia-Greece
28.04.99 .....Albania-Latvia
28.04.99 .....Georgia-Norway
30.05.99 .....Norway-Georgia
05.06.99 .....Albania-Norway
05.06.99 .....Georgia-Greece
05.06.99 .....Latvia-Slovenia
09.06.99 .....Albania-Slovenia
09.06.99 .....Greece-Latvia
04.09.99 .....Norway-Greece
04.09.99 .....Latvia-Albania
04.09.99 .....Slovenia-Georgia
08.09.99 .....Greece-Albania
08.09.99 .....Norway-Slovenia
08.09.99 .....Georgia-Latvia
09.10.99 .....Albania-Georgia
09.10.99 .....Slovenia-Greece
09.10.99 .....Latvia-Norway

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Latvia	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Greece	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Slovenia	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Norway	3	1	1	1	5	6	4
Georgia	3	1	0	2	1	4	3
Albania	3	0	2	1	2	3	2

Group 3

05.09.98 .....Finland-Moldova 3-2
05.09.98 .....Turkey-Northern Ireland 3-0
10.10.98 .....Turkey-Germany 1-0
10.10.98 .....Northern Ireland-Finland 1-0
14.10.98 .....Moldova-Germany 1-3
14.10.98 .....Turkey-Finland 1-3
18.11.98 .....Northern Ireland-Moldova 2-2
27.03.99 .....Northern Ireland-Germany
27.03.99 .....Turkey-Moldova
31.03.99 .....Germany-Finland
31.03.99 .....Moldova-Northern Ireland
04.06.99 .....Germany-Moldova
05.06.99 .....Finland-Turkey
09.06.99 .....Moldova-Finland
04.09.99 .....Finland-Germany
04.09.99 .....Northern Ireland-Turkey
08.09.99 .....Germany-Northern Ireland
08.09.99 .....Moldova-Turkey
09.10.99 .....Germany-Turkey
09.10.99 .....Finland-Northern Ireland

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finland	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Turkey	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Northern Ireland	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Germany	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Moldova	3	0	1	2	5	8	1

Group 4

05.09.98 .....Armenia-Andorra 3-1
05.09.98 .....Ukraine-Russia 3-2
05.09.98 .....Iceland-France 1-1
10.10.98 .....Andorra-Ukraine 0-2
10.10.98 .....Russia-France 2-3
10.10.98 .....Armenia-Iceland 0-0
14.10.98 .....Ukraine-Armenia 2-0
14.10.98 .....France-Andorra 2-0
14.10.98 .....Iceland-Russia 1-0
27.03.99 .....Andorra-Iceland
27.03.99 .....France-Ukraine
27.03.99 .....Armenia-Russia
31.03.99 .....Ukraine-Iceland
31.03.99 .....Russia-Andorra
31.03.99 .....France-Armenia
05.06.99 .....Ukraine-Andorra
05.06.99 .....France-Russia
05.06.99 .....Iceland-Armenia
09.06.99 .....Andorra-France
09.06.99 .....Russia-Iceland
09.06.99 .....Armenia-Ukraine
04.09.99 .....Ukraine-France
04.09.99 .....Iceland-Andorra
04.09.99 .....Russia-Armenia
08.09.99 .....Andorra-Russia
08.09.99 .....Iceland-Ukraine
08.09.99 .....Armenia-France
09.10.99 .....France-Iceland
09.10.99 .....Russia-Ukraine
09.10.99 .....Andorra-Armenia

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ukraine	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
France	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Iceland	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Armenia	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Russia	3	0	0	3	4	7	0
Andorra	3	0	0	3	1	7	0

Group 5

05.09.98 .....Sweden-England 2-1
06.09.98 .....Bulgaria-Poland 0-3
10.10.98 .....Poland-Luxembourg 3-0
10.10.98 .....England-Bulgaria 0-0
14.10.98 .....Bulgaria-Sweden 0-1
14.10.98 .....Luxembourg-England 0-3
27.03.99 .....Sweden-Luxembourg
27.03.99 .....England-Poland
31.03.99 .....Luxembourg-Bulgaria
31.03.99 .....Poland-Sweden
05.06.99 .....Poland-Bulgaria
05.06.99 .....England-Sweden
08.06.99 .....Luxembourg-Poland
08.06.99 .....Bulgaria-England
04.09.99 .....Sweden-Bulgaria
04.09.99 .....England-Luxembourg
07.09.99 .....Luxembourg-Sweden
07.09.99 .....Poland-England
09.10.99 .....Bulgaria-Luxembourg
09.10.99 .....Sweden-Poland

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Sweden	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
England	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Bulgaria	3	0	1	2	0	4	1
Luxembourg	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

Group 6

05.09.98 .....Austria-Israel 1-1
05.09.98 .....Cyprus-Spain 3-2
10.10.98 .....Cyprus-Austria 0-3
10.10.98 .....San Marino-Israel 0-5
14.10.98 .....San Marino-Austria 1-4
14.10.98 .....Israel-Spain 1-2
18.11.98 .....San Marino-Cyprus 0-1
10.02.99 .....Cyprus-San Marino
27.03.99 .....Spain-Austria
28.03.99 .....Israel-Cyprus
31.03.99 .....San Marino-Spain
28.04.99 .....Austria-San Marino
05.06.99 .....Spain-San Marino
05.06.99 .....Israel-Austria
04.09.99 .....Austria-Spain
04.09.99 .....Cyprus-Israel
08.09.99 .....Israel-San Marino
08.09.99 .....Spain-Cyprus
10.10.99 .....Austria-Cyprus
10.10.99 .....Spain-Israel

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Cyprus	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
Israel	3	1	1	1	7	3	4
Spain	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
San Marino	3	0	0	3	1	10	0

Group 7

02.09.98 .....Romania-Liechtenstein 7-0
05.09.98 .....Slovakia-Azerbaijan 3-0
06.09.98 .....Hungary-Portugal 0-1
10.10.98 .....Portugal-Romania 0-1
10.10.98 .....Liechtenstein-Slovakia 0-4
10.10.98 .....Azerbaijan-Hungary 0-4
14.10.98 .....Hungary-Romania 1-1
14.10.98 .....Slovakia-Portugal 0-3
14.10.98 .....Liechtenstein-Azerbaijan 2-1
26.03.99 .....Portugal-Azerbaijan
27.03.99 .....Romania-Slovakia
27.03.99 .....Hungary-Liechtenstein
30.03.99 .....Slovakia-Hungary
30.03.99 .....Liechtenstein-Portugal
30.03.99 .....Azerbaijan-Romania
05.06.99 .....Portugal-Slovakia
05.06.99 .....Romania-Hungary
05.06.99 .....Azerbaijan-Liechtenstein
08.06.99 .....Hungary-Slovakia
08.06.99 .....Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.06.99 .....Romania-Azerbaijan
04.09.99 .....Slovakia-Romania
04.09.99 .....Azerbaijan-Portugal
04.09.99 .....Liechtenstein-Hungary
07.09.99 .....Romania-Portugal
07.09.99 .....Slovakia-Liechtenstein
07.09.99 .....Hungary-Azerbaijan
09.10.99 .....Portugal-Hungary
09.10.99 .....Liechtenstein-Romania
09.10.99 .....Azerbaijan-Slovakia

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	3	2	1	0	9	1	7
Slovakia	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Portugal	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Hungary	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Liechtenstein	3	1	0	2	2	12	3
Azerbaijan	3	0	0	3	1	9	0

Group 8

05.09.98 .....Rep Ireland-Croatia 2-0
06.09.98 .....Macedonia-Malta 4-0
10.10.98 .....Malta-Croatia 1-4
14.10.98 .....Rep Ireland-Malta 5-0
14.10.98 .....Croatia-Macedonia 3-2
18.11.98 .....Malta-Macedonia 1-2

18.11.98 .....Yugoslavia-Rep Ireland 1-0
10.02.98 .....Malta-Yugoslavia
27.03.99 .....Macedonia-Rep Ireland
27.03.99 .....Yugoslavia-Croatia
31.03.99 .....Croatia-Malta
31.03.99 .....Yugoslavia-Macedonia
05.06.99 .....Macedonia-Croatia
05.06.99 .....Rep Ireland-Yugoslavia
09.06.99 .....Yugoslavia-Malta
04.09.99 .....Croatia-Rep Ireland
08.09.99 .....Malta-Rep Ireland
08.09.99 .....Macedonia-Yugoslavia
10.10.99 .....Croatia-Yugoslavia
10.10.99 .....Rep Ireland-Macedonia

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rep. Ireland	3	2	0	1	7	1	6
Macedonia	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Croatia	3	2	0	1	7	5	6
Yugoslavia	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Malta	4	0	0	4	2	15	0

Group 9

04.06.98 .....Estonia-Faroe Islands 5-0
19.08.98 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Faroe Is.....1-0
05.09.98 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina Estonia 1-1
05.09.98 .....Lithuania-Scotland.....0-0
06.09.98 .....Faroe Islands-Czech Republic.....0-1
10.10.98 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Czech Rep.....1-3
10.10.98 .....Lithuania-Faroe Islands 0-0
10.10.98 .....Scotland-Estonia.....3-2
14.10.98 .....Lithuania-Bosnia-Herzegovina.....4-2
14.10.98 .....Scotland-Faroe Islands 2-1
14.10.98 .....Czech Republic-Estonia 4-1
27.03.99 .....Czech Republic-Lithuania
27.03.99 .....Scotland-Bosnia-Herzegovina
31.03.99 .....Lithuania-Estonia
31.03.99 .....Scotland-Czech Republic
05.06.99 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Lithuania
05.06.99 .....Estonia-Czech Republic
05.06.99 .....Faroe Islands-Scotland
09.06.99 .....Estonia-Lithuania
09.06.99 .....Faroe Islands-Bosnia-Herzegovina
09.06.99 .....Czech Republic-Scotland
04.09.99 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Scotland
04.09.99 .....Faroe Islands -Estonia
04.09.99 .....Lithuania-Czech Republic
08.09.99 .....Czech Republic -Bosnia-Herzegovina
08.09.99 .....Faroe Islands-Lithuania
08.09.99 .....Estonia-Scotland
09.10.99 .....Estonia-Bosnia-Herzegovina
09.10.99 .....Czech Republic-Faroe Islands
09.10.99 .....Scotland-Lithuania

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Republic	3	3	0	0	8	2	9
Scotland	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Lithuania	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Estonia	4	1	1	2	9	8	4
Bosnia-Herzegov.	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Faroe Islands	5	0	1	4	1	9	0

EUROPE

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sturm Graz	20	14	2	4	38	12	44
Rapid Vienna	20	13	4	3	33	14	43
Grazer AK	20	12	4	4	26	14	40
Linz ASK	20	11	3	6	34	24	36
Salzburg	20	7	6	7	27	26	27
Austria Vienna	19	7	5	7	20	23	26
FC Tirol	19	5	5	9	22	30	20
SV Ried	18	4	4	10	14	20	16
Lustenau	19	2	6	11	14	37	12
Vorwarts Steyr	19	1	3	15	15	43	6

BELGIUM

Sunday, December 20

Eendracht Aalst 1 (Van der Heyden 84)
Standard 0 Att: 7,000

Ekeren 2 (Karagiannis 37, Sonck 52)
Club Brugge 0 Att: 4,000

Harelbeke 1 (De Tollenaere 39)
Charleroi 1 (Djim 35) Att: 4,500

Wednesday, January 13

Standard 2 (Lukunku 28, Afolabi 79)
Lierse 2 (Cavens 32, Van Meir 66)
Att: 12,000

Friday, January 15

Mouscron 2 (Casto 10, Tanghe 69)
Anderlecht 3 (Radzinski 68, Goor 74, Besengez og 85) Att: 9,000

Saturday, January 16

Beveren 0
Harelbeke 3 (Paas 11, Maes 56, Zangionov 64)
Att: 3,000

Charleroi 2 (Ouedraogo 12, D. Brogno 86)
Lokeren 1 (Vonasek 30) Att: 6,000

Gent 3 (Martens 1, Barka 36, 67)
Standard 2 (E. Mpenza 4, Folha 60) Att: 8,500

Westerlo 2 (Janssen 4, T. Brogno 48)
Lommel 1 (Simons 57) Att: 6,000

Sunday, January 17

Club Brugge 3 (De Brul 50, Verheyen 55, Claessens 75)
St Truiden 2 (Teppers pen 67, 80) Att: 10,000

Ekeren 1 (Hofmans 45)
Eendracht Aalst 0 Att: 4,000

Kortrijk 3 (Boone 37, Demkine 51, Heymans 78)
Lierse 2 (Van De Weyer 62, 80) Att: 5,000

Monday, January 18

Genk 3 (Origi 32, T Gudjonsson 83, N'Sumbu 90)
Ostende 0 Att: 11,660

Saturday, January 23

Anderlecht 3 (Anastasiou 64, Radzinski 65, 87)
Westerlo 2 (Mitrovic 11, 53) Att: 25,485

Lierse 4 (Cavens 54, 78, Van Meir pen 55, Huysmans 74)
Charleroi 0 Att: 6,500

Lokeren 4 (Dias 2, Van Geneugden 5, Vonasek 32, Koller 70)
Beveren 3 (Sels 41, Van Den Eede 49, 71) Att: 5,200

Lommel 2 (Dekelver 30, Eshun 68)
Club Brugge 1 (Fadiga 88) Att: 7,000

Ostende 1 (Edmilson 25)
Kortrijk 3 (Heymans 45, Stojanovic 53, 69)
Att: 5,000

St Truiden 2 (Fiers 8, Isaias 23)
Ekeren 0 Att: 6,000

Sunday, January 24

Eendracht Aalst 0
Gent 2 (Degryse 20, Martens pen 88) Att: 6,000

Harelbeke 0
Mouscron 4 (Besengez 9, Vidovic pen 36, Wuyts 58, 72) Att: 7,500

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	21	13	4	4	38	22	43
Genk	20	12	5	3	44	23	41
Lokeren	21	11	4	6	45	30	37
Mouscron	21	10	7	4	45	33	37
Gent	21	10	7	4	37	36	37
Anderlecht	20	10	5	5	39	30	35
Standard	20	10	2	8	30	22	32
Ekeren	21	9	4	8	35	32	31
Westerlo	21	9	3	9	43	37	30
Lierse	21	9	3	9	39	34	30
St Truiden	20	8	6	6	28	24	30
Aalst	21	7	5	9	30	37	26
Harelbeke	21	5	8	8	26	34	23
Charleroi	20	4	8	8	26	31	20
Lommel	21	5	4	12	23	34	19
Beveren	20	4	4	12	22	36	16
Kortrijk	21	3	5	13	30	53	14
Ostende	21	2	6	13	19	51	12

LEAGUE CUP – 2ND RND

Westerlo 3 Ekeren 4

BELGIAN CUP

Jan 9: Ubgelmunster 4 Tilleur L. 0; Lokeren 2 Denderleeuw 0; Lommel 2 St Truiden 3; Westerlo 2 Harelbeke 2 (aet) *Westerlo won on penalties.*

Jan 10: Eendracht Aalst 0 Standard 3; Cercle Brugge 0 Kortrijk 0 (aet) *Kortrijk won on penalties;* Genk 4 Mouscron 3 (aet); Lierse 2 Denderhoutem 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Litex	15	11	3	1	48	11	36
Levski Sofia	15	9	4	2	31	9	31
Levski Kjetil	15	10	1	4	33	13	31
Slavia	15	7	6	2	25	11	27
Neftohimik	15	8	1	6	22	17	25
CSKA	15	7	4	4	22	22	25
Lok Sofia	15	7	3	5	18	16	24
Minjor	15	6	4	5	19	17	22
Spartak Varna	15	6	0	9	19	27	18
Shumen	15	4	5	6	14	20	17
Metalurg	15	5	1	9	16	24	16
Dobrudzha	15	4	3	8	18	29	15
Botev	15	4	3	8	14	27	15
Pirin	15	4	3	8	12	32	15
Septemvri	15	2	4	9	15	33	10
Lok Plovdiv	15	1	5	9	11	29	8

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	16	12	2	2	33	10	38
Rijeka	16	12	1	3	23	12	37
Hajduk	17	9	6	2	33	14	33
Osijek	17	9	3	5	28	15	30
Varteks	17	6	3	8	26	26	21
Zagreb	16	4	7	5	20	26	19
Hrvatski drag	17	4	6	7	11	16	18
Cibalia	17	4	5	8	15	22	17
Sibenik	17	5	2	10	22	40	17
Zadarkomerc	17	4	4	9	20	30	16
Slaven	17	3	6	8	19	29	15
Mladost 127	16	4	3	9	18	28	15

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	15	8	7	0	33	11	31
Teplice	15	9	4	2	32	16	31
Drnovice	15	7	6	2	27	19	27
Slavia	15	6	7	2	21	15	25
Olomouc	15	6	6	3	20	18	24
Blsany	15	7	2	6	25	21	23
Zizkov	15	6	3	6	17	23	21
Opava	15	5	5	5	26	28	20
Ostrava	15	3	10	2	20	13	19
Brno	15	4	4	7	16	20	16
Hradec	15	4	4	7	18	23	16
Liberec	15	3	7	5	15	20	16
Plzen	15	4	3	8	12	23	15
Jablonec	15	3	4	8	16	25	13
Dukla	15	3	4	8	9	20	13
Karvina	15	3	2	10	13	25	11

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AB	17	10	4	3	31	14	34
FC Copenhagen	17	8	6	3	35	28	30
Brondby	16	9	1	6	37	18	28
AaB Aalborg	15	7	7	1	35	20	28
Herfolge	16	6	7	3	24	17	25
Vejle	16	7	2	7	28	26	23
Silkeborg	17	5	8	4	27	26	23
Lyngby	16	6	4	6	23	33	22
AGF	15	5	4	6	21	28	19
Viborg	16	4	1	11	29	38	13
Aarhus	17	3	4	10	27	40	13
B93	16	2	2	12	13	42	8

ENGLAND

Saturday, December 26

Arsenal 1 (Overmars 7)
West Ham 0 Att: 38,098

Blackburn 2 (Gallacher 44, Sherwood 88)
Aston Villa 1 (Scimeca 81) Att: 27,536

Coventry 1 (Aloisi 81)
Tottenham 1 (Campbell 17) Att: 23,098

Everton 0
Derby 0 Att: 39,206

Man Utd 3 (Johnsen 28, 59, Giggs 62)
Nottm Forest 0 Att: 55,216

Middlesbrough 1 (Deane 32)
Liverpool 3 (Carragher 17, Redknapp 35, Heggem 88) Att: 34,626

Newcastle 0
Leeds 3 (Kewell 38, Bowyer 62, Hasselbaink 90)
Att: 36,783

Sheffield Wed 0
Leicester 1 (Cottee 34) Att: 33,513

Southampton 0
Chelsea 2 (Flo 20, Poyet 48) Att: 15,123

Wimbledon 2 (Euell 33, M. Hughes 51)
Charlton 1 (Redfearn 29) Att: 19,106

Monday, December 28

Aston Villa 2 (Southgate 7, Ehiogu 85)
Sheffield Wed 1 (Carbone 8) Att: 39,217

Charlton 0
Arsenal 1 (Overmars pen 53) Att: 20,043

Derby 2 (Sturridge 29, Hunt 85)
Middlesbrough 1 (Beck 77) Att: 32,726

Leicester 1 (Walsh 44)
Blackburn 1 (Gallacher 38) Att: 21,083

Liverpool 4 (Owen 67, 80, Rielde 71, 84)
Newcastle 2 (Solano 29, Andersson 56) Att: 44,605

Nottm Forest 1 (Chettle pen 54)
Southampton 1 (Kachloul 48) Att: 23,456

Tottenham 4 (Ferdinand 24, Armstrong 63, 76, 81)
Everton 1 (Bakayoko 31) Att: 36,053

West Ham 2 (Wright 7, Hartson 68)
Coventry 0 Att: 25,662

Monday, December 29

Chelsea 0
Man Utd 0 Att: 34,741

Leeds 2 (Ribeiro 26, Hopkin 57)
Wimbledon 2 (Earle 41, Cort 83) Att: 39,816

Saturday, January 9

Newcastle 0
Chelsea 1 (Petrescu 39) Att: 36,711

Arsenal 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 38,107

Blackburn 1 (Gillespie 22)
Leeds 0 Att: 27,620

Coventry 4 (Huckerby 45, 46, 75, Telfer 54)
Nottm Forest 0 Att: 17,172

Everton 0
Leicester 0 Att: 32,792

Middlesbrough 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 34,643

Sheffield Wed 0
Tottenham 0 Att: 28,204

Southampton 3 (Kachloul 8, Colleter 52, Beattie 89)
Charlton 1 (Hunt 13) Att: 15,222

Wimbledon 2 (Euell 8, Roberts 83)
Derby 1 (Wanchope 76) Att: 12,732

Sunday, January 10

Man Utd 4 (Yorke 10, Cole 40, 67, Solskjaer 80)
West Ham 1 (Lampard 89) Att: 55,180

Saturday, January 16

Chelsea 2 (Leboeuf 45, Di Matteo 90)
Coventry 1 (Huckerby 9) Att: 34,869

Derby 1 (Burton 84)
Blackburn 0 Att: 27,386

Leeds 2 (Smith 21, Bowyer 27)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 37,473

Leicester 2 (Zagorakis 35, Walsh 73)
Man Utd 6 (Yorke 10, 63, 84, Cole 49, 61, Stam 90)
Att: 22,091

Liverpool 7 (Fowler 22, 37, 47, Matteo 35, Carragher 55, Owen 63, Thompson 73)
Southampton 1 (Ostenstad 59) Att: 44,011

Nottm Forest 0
Arsenal 1 (Keown 34) Att: 26,021

Tottenham 0
Wimbledon 0 Att: 32,422

West Ham 0
Sheffield Wed 4 (Hinchcliffe 26, Rudi 31, Humphreys 68, Carbone pen 73) Att: 25,642

Sunday, January 17

Charlton 2 (Bright 64, Pringle 90)
Newcastle 2 (Ketsbaia 13, Solano 55)
Att: 20,043

Monday, January 18

Aston Villa 3 (Joachim 40, 51, Merson 78)
Everton 0 Att: 32,488

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	22	11	10	1	34	18	43
Aston Villa	22	12	7	3	34	20	43
Manchester Utd	22	11	8	3	49	26	41
Arsenal	22	10	9	3	23	11	39
Leeds	22	9	9	4	36	20	36
Liverpool	22	10	5	7	43	26	35
Wimbledon	22	9	7	6	29	33	34
West Ham	22	9	5	8	25	31	32
Middlesbrough	22	7	10	5	32	28	31
Derby	22	7	10	5	22	20	31
Tottenham	22	7	8	7	28	30	29
Leicester	22	7	8	7	25	27	29
Sheffield Wed	22	7	5	10	25	22	26
Newcastle	22	6	7	9	26	31	25
Everton	22	5	9	8	13	24	24
Blackburn	22	5	6	11	21	29	21
Coventry	22	5	5	12	21	31	20
Charlton	22	3	8	11	26	36	17
Southampton	22	4	5	13	20	46	17
Nottm Forest	22	2	7	13	18	41	13

FA CUP – 3RD RND

Jan 2: Aston Villa 3 Hull City 0; Blackburn 2 Charlton 0; Bristol City 0 Everton 2; Coventry 7 Macclesfield 0; Leicester 4 Birmingham 2; Newcastle 2 Crystal Palace 1; Nottm Forest 0 Portsmouth 1; Oldham 0 Chelsea 2; Plymouth 0 Derby 3; Port Vale 0 Liverpool 3; Rushden & Diamonds 0 Leeds 0; Sheffield Wed 4 Norwich 1; Southampton 1 Fulham 1; Tottenham 5 Watford 2; West Ham 1 Swansea 1; Wimbledon 1 Man City 0.

Jan 3: Man Utd 3 Middlesbrough 1

Jan 4: Preston 2 Arsenal 4

3RD RND – REPLAYS

Jan 13: Fulham 1 Southampton 0; Leeds 3 Rushden & Diamonds 1; Swansea 1 West Ham 0.

FA CUP 4TH RND

Jan 23: Aston Villa 0 Fulham 2; Barnsley 3 Bournemouth 1; Blackburn 1 Sunderland 0; Bristol Rovers 3 Leyton Orient 0; Everton 1 Ipswich 0; Leicester 0 Coventry 3; Newcastle 3 Bradford City 0; Portsmouth 1 Leeds 5; Sheffield 2 Stockport 0; Swansea 0 Derby 1; Wimbledon 1 Tottenham 1; Wrexham 1 Huddersfield 1.

Jan 24: Man Utd 2 Liverpool 1; Wolves 1 Arsenal 2.

FRANCE

Saturday, January 16

Auxerre 5 (Diomede 46, Deniaud 48, 80, Marlet 50, 70)
Lorient 0 Att: 6,000

Le Havre 1 (Nee 17)
Bastia 1 (Pantic 39) Att: 8,000

Lens 1 (Nouma 35)
Monaco 1 (Trezeguet pen 82)
Att: 41,000

Montpellier 1 (Silvestre 8)
Bordeaux 1 (Laslandes 45)

Nantes 2 (Da Rocha 41, Monterubio 86)
Toulouse 0 Att: 17,000

Rennes 1 (Arribage 12)
Marseille 1 (Camara 79) Att: 20,000

Metz 1 (Boffin 90)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 15,000

Paris SG 1 (Fischer og 90)
Nancy 2 (Kone 56, Wiart 60) Att: 35,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	21	14	6	1	38	14	48
Bordeaux	21	14	3	4	44	18	45
Nantes	21	9	7	5	29	22	34
Rennes	21	9	6	6	26	25	33
Lyon	20	8	8	4	26	19	32
Auxerre	21	8	6	7	29	25	30
Bastia	21	9	3	9	27	25	30
Monaco	20	8	5	7	28	20	29
Lens	21	8	5	8	29	26	29
Montpellier	21	8	4	9	38	35	28
PSG	21	6	7	8	19	19	25
Metz	21	6	7	8	19	28	25
Strasbourg	21	5	9	7	17	22	24
Nancy	21	6	6	9	20	27	24
Le Havre	21	4	7	10	15	27	19
Lorient	21	4	7	10	17	32	19
Sochaux	19	3	7	9	16	34	16
Toulouse	21	2	9	10	14	33	15

LEAGUE CUP – 2ND RND

Jan 9: Cannes 0 Louhans-Cuiseaux 1; Guingamp 0 Amiens 1; Laval 0 Rennes 1; Le Havre 1 Bordeaux 0; Lorient 1 Chateauroux 2; Metz 1 Nantes 0; Monaco 1 Caen 0; Niort 0 Auxerre 1; Paris SG 1 St Etienne 0; Red Star 1 Nice 1 (aet) *Nice won on penalties*; Sochaux 1 Bastia 0; Valence 0 Toulouse 0 (aet) *Toulouse won on penalties.*

Jan 10: Lyon 0 Montpellier 2; Nancy 1 Beauvais 0; Strasbourg 1 Troyes 4; Marseille 1 Lens 1 (aet) *Lens won on penalties.*

FRENCH CUP

Jan 22: Niort 0 Strasbourg 0 (aet) *Strasbourg won on penalties*; Thouars 0 Paris SG 2 (abandoned).

Jan 23: Lens 4 Armentieres 2; Chateauroux 1 Lyon 0; Rennes 4 Coulaines 0; Dijon 2 Bastia 1; Laval 1 Nancy 0; Metz 1 Bordeaux 0; Marseille 2 Auxerre 0; Paris FC 1 Lorient 0; La Roche-sur-Yon 0 Nantes 1; Sochaux 3 Beauvais 1; Troyes 2 Montpellier 1; Blagnac 0 Le Havre 2 (aet); Amiens 1 Monaco 1 (aet) *Amiens won on penalties*; Jura Sud Foot 1 Toulouse 1 (aet) *Jura Sud Foot won on penalties.*

GERMANY

Sunday, December 20

Werder Bremen 2 (Bogdanovic 45, 47)
Hertha 1 (Preetz 46) Att: 28,400

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	18	14	2	2	43	13	44
Leverkusen	18	10	6	2	40	18	36
Kaiserslautern	18	10	4	4	29	28	34
Munich 1860	18	9	5	4	32	24	32
Dortmund	18	8	5	5	28	18	29
Hertha	18	9	2	7	26	19	29
Wolfsburg	18	7	6	5	34	28	27
Hamburg	18	6	6	6	23	23	24
Werder Bremen	18	6	5	7	27	25	23
Freiburg	18	5	7	6	21	23	22
Stuttgart	18	5	6	7	23	25	21
Schalke	18	5	6	7	20	29	21
Duisburg	18	4	7	7	20	29	19
Bochum	18	5	4	9	22	33	19
Frankfurt	18	4	5	9	21	29	17
Hansa Rostock	18	3	7	8	26	34	16
Nurnberg	18	2	9	7	20	33	15
Borussia MG	18	2	4	12	20	44	10

GREECE

Jan 16: Aris 3 OFI 1.
Jan 17: Panionios 2 Ethnikos A 0; Olympiakos 3 Xanthi 1; PAOK 1 Proodeftiki 0; AEK 2 Iraklis 2; Ionikos 1 Paniliakos 1; Apollon 4 Ethnikos P 0; Kavala 2 Veroia 1.
Jan 18: Eleysina 1 Panathinaikos 2.
Jan 24: Olympiakos 5 Panionios 0; Ethnikos A 1 PAOK 0; Xanthi 2 AEK 1; Proodeftiki 0 Ionikos 0; Iraklis 2 Apollon 0; Paniliakos 3 Aris 1; Ethnikos P 2 Eleysina 2; OFI 4 Kavala 0; Veroia 0 Panathinaikos 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	16	13	1	2	45	12	40
Panathinaikos	16	11	1	4	32	19	34
AEK	16	10	3	3	35	15	33
PAOK	16	10	2	4	26	17	32
Xanthi	16	9	4	3	19	13	31
Aris	16	8	3	5	22	22	27
OFI	16	8	2	6	24	19	26
Iraklis	16	6	5	5	26	17	23
Ethnikos A	16	7	2	7	22	24	23
Ionikos	16	6	4	6	25	19	22
Panionios	16	6	2	8	29	25	20
Paniliakos	16	6	2	8	22	25	20
Kavala	16	5	5	6	26	36	20
Proodeftiki	16	3	5	8	15	22	14
Eleysina	16	2	8	6	13	21	14
Apollon	16	2	4	10	19	42	10
Veroia	16	1	4	11	6	24	7
Ethnikos P	16	0	5	11	6	40	5

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	18	13	4	1	42	15	43
Vitesse	19	11	4	4	36	23	37
Ajax	19	9	7	3	36	16	34
Heerenveen	18	9	6	3	28	19	33
PSV	19	8	7	4	45	34	31
Roda JC	18	9	4	5	30	22	31
Twente	19	8	6	5	29	24	30
AZ	19	6	10	3	28	26	28
NEC	19	7	6	6	28	27	27
Utrecht	19	7	4	8	35	35	25
Willem II	19	7	4	8	31	35	25
Cambuur	19	5	6	8	22	34	21
MVV	19	5	5	9	23	32	20
De Graafschap	19	3	9	7	19	30	18
Fortuna	19	4	5	10	22	35	17
Sparta	19	4	3	12	22	39	15
NAC Breda	18	3	4	11	22	32	13
Waalwijk	19	2	4	13	21	41	10

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	17	13	2	2	41	13	41
Gyor	17	10	5	2	32	19	35
Diosgyor	17	10	4	3	42	26	34
Dunaferr	17	10	2	5	34	22	32
Zalaegerszeg	17	9	5	3	25	17	32
Vac	17	9	4	4	30	24	31
Ferencvaros	17	8	6	3	30	21	30
Ujpest	17	9	2	6	30	26	29
Vasas	17	7	3	7	25	26	24
Gazszer	17	5	7	5	21	20	22
Debrecen	17	6	3	8	24	25	21
Nyiregyhaza	17	5	4	8	25	32	19
Kispest Honved	17	5	4	8	22	31	19
Haladas	17	4	1	12	14	33	13
Siofok	17	2	6	9	15	25	12
Kerulet	17	3	3	11	15	37	12
Videoton	17	2	3	12	22	36	9
BVSC	17	1	6	10	12	26	9

ITALY

Sunday, December 20

Cagliari 0
Bologna 1 (Signori 51) Att: 18,191

Empoli 3 (Pane 10, Di Napoli 24, 89)
Parma 5 (Crespo 11, Boghossian 45, Fuser 57, 90, Fiore 83) Att: 12,306

Inter 4 (Cauet 58, Zamorano 77, Baggio 87, Zanetti 89)
Roma 1 (Sergio 37) Att: 67,797

Juventus 3 (Inzaghi 20, 29, 87)
Salernitana 0 Att: 45,012

Lazio 3 (Salas 55, 90, Mancini 62)
Udinese 1 (Locatelli 5) Att: 41,749

Perugia 2 (Rapajic 1, Nakata pen 90)
Fiorentina 2 (Robbiati 10, Batistuta 74) Att: 20,188

Piacenza 3 (Piovani 20, Stroppa 42, Rastelli 89)
Bari 2 (Masinga 37, Innocenti 90) Att: 8,696

Sampdoria 2 (Palmieri 58, Ortega 86)
Milan 2 (Leonardo 39, Bierhoff 73) Att: 22,763

Vicenza 0
Venezia 0 Att: 15,468

Wednesday, January 6

Bari 2 (Neqrouz 8, Innocenti 61)
Perugia 1 (Tedesco 47) Att: 24,801

Bologna 0
Lazio 1 (Vieri 78) Att: 31,160

Fiorentina 1 (Rui Costa 28)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 36,223

Milan 1 (Albertini pen 27)
Juventus 1 (Fonseca 85) Att: 81,715

Parma 1 (Fuser 54)
Inter 0 Att: 42,055

Roma 2 (Di Francesco 26, Tommasi 53)
Piacenza 2 (Stroppa 38, Dal Moro og 48) Att: 54,670

Salernitana 1 (Belmonte 10)
Cagliari 3 (Macellari 42, Muzzi 78, 90) Att: 31,681

Udinese 2 (Sosa 42, Amoroso 75)
Vicenza 1 (Ambrosetti 7) Att: 20,296

Sunday, January 10

Cagliari 4 (Muzzi 2, 62, O'Neill 45, 89)
Roma 3 (Delvecchio 27, 41, Gautieri 79) Att: 20,635

Empoli 1 (Di Napoli 58)
Milan 1 (Ziege 83) Att: 13,360

Inter 6 (Ronaldo pen 4, 72, Baggio 24, Zamorano 29, 41, 47)
Venezia 2 (Maniero 20, 89) Att: 66,370

Juventus 1 (Davids 47)
Bari 1 (Andersson pen 76) Att: 44,630

Lazio 2 (Vieri 65, Mihajlovic 90)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 55,487

Perugia 1 (Nakata 67)
Udinese 3 (Pierini 21, Matrecano og 39, Sosa 90) Att: 12,572

Piacenza 3 (Inzaghi 17, pen 75, Cristallini 56)
Parma 6 (Cristallini og 13, Balbo 51, 63, 65, Fuser 67, Crespo 83) Att: 10,498

Sampdoria 1 (Palmieri 63)
Bologna 1 (Signori 13) Att: 17,648

Vicenza 1 (Luiso 31)
Salernitana 0 Att: 15,727

Sunday, January 17

Bari 3 (Masinga 35, De Rosa 47, Olivares 70)
Sampdoria 1 (Laigle 65) Att: 18,786

Bologna 2 (Signori pen 41, Fontolan 52)
Inter 0 Att: 36,545

Fiorentina 4 (Batistuta 7, 79, 88, Edmundo 76)
Cagliari 2 (O'Neill 32, De Patre) Att: 33,273

Milan 2 (Guglielminpietro 37, Bierhoff 40)
Perugia 1 (Nakata 90) Att: 46,417

Parma 1 (Crespo 54)
Lazio 3 (Salas pen 51, Mancini 68, Vieri 90) Att: 23,620

Roma 3 (Di Francesco 6, Delvecchio 44, Gautieri 77)
Vicenza 0 Att: 45,160

Salernitana 1 (Fresi 17)
Piacenza 1 (Dionigi 58) Att: 29,623

Udinese 0
Empoli 0 Att: 18,277

Venezia 1 (Pedone 5)
Juventus 1 (Fonseca 53) Att: 12,292

Wednesday, January 20

Venezia 3 (Valtolina 54, Maniero 65, 76)
Empoli 2 (Di Napoli pen 17, 38) Att: 7,098

Sunday, January 24

Bologna 2 (Signori 15, 43)
Milan 3 (Guglielminpietro 21, Magoni og 53, NGotty 90) Att: 32,939

Empoli 0
Fiorentina 3 (Heinrich 77, Rui Costa 81, Edmundo 83) Att: 14,196

Inter 5 (Baggio 30, 78, Simic 60, Simeone 67 72)
Cagliari 1 (Muzzi 3) Att: 68,170

Juventus 2 (Fonseca 49, Zidane 55)
Perugia 1 (Kaviedes 20) Att: 50,000

Lazio 4 (Mihajlovic 10, Salas 59, Stankovic 78, Mancini 81)
Piacenza 1 (Buso 57) Att: 46,934

Salernitana 2 (Bernardini pen 11, Giampaolo 54)
Roma 1 (Di Biagio 77) Att: 33,813

Sampdoria 1 (Ortega 50)
Udinese 1 (Sosa 2) Att: 18,369

Venezia 2 (Maniero 8, Tuta 90)
Bari 1 (De Ascentis 50) Att: 9,512

Vicenza 0
Parma 0 Att: 14,830

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiorentina	18	12	2	4	34	18	38
Lazio	18	10	5	3	37	20	35
Parma	18	9	6	3	31	15	33
Milan	18	9	6	3	28	21	33
Inter	18	9	3	6	37	26	30
Roma	18	7	6	5	37	26	27
Juventus	18	7	6	5	20	18	27
Bologna	18	6	7	5	22	16	25
Bari	18	5	10	3	23	20	25
Udinese	18	6	6	6	22	27	24
Cagliari	18	6	2	10	29	33	20
Perugia	18	5	4	9	24	33	19
Piacenza	18	4	6	8	25	31	18
Venezia	18	4	6	8	13	24	18
Vicenza	18	3	7	8	10	22	16
Salernitana	18	4	4	10	15	29	16
Sampdoria	18	3	7	8	17	33	16
Empoli	18	3	7	8	15	27	14

ITALIAN CUP – QUARTER-FINAL

First leg
Juventus 1 (Perrotta 13)
Bologna 2 (Boselli 74, Ingesson pen 90) Att: 8,000

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	15	13	1	1	36	11	40
Lech	15	10	0	5	33	16	30
Legia	15	8	4	3	21	14	28
Gornik	15	7	5	3	23	16	26
Widzew	15	8	1	6	27	20	25
Ruch R	15	6	4	5	23	16	22
Amica	15	6	2	7	24	24	20
Polonia	15	5	5	5	20	21	20
Belchatow	15	6	2	7	17	23	20
Ruch C	15	5	4	6	14	23	19
Zaglebie	15	4	4	7	25	28	16
LKS	15	4	4	7	16	24	16
Katowice	15	5	1	9	14	27	16
Pogon	15	4	3	8	20	31	15
Stomil	15	4	2	9	14	22	14
Odra	15	1	6	8	15	26	9

PORTUGAL

Sunday, December 13

Estrela Amadora 1 (Gilberto pen 14)
Salgueiros 1 (Fernando Almeida 68)

Monday, December 14

Chaves 0 Benfica 4
Academica 0 FC Porto 2

Sunday, January 3

Beira Mar 4 (Gila 9, Fary 30, Simic 35, 66)
Salgueiros 1 (Joao Pedro 21)

Chaves 3 (Alvarez 3, Barbosa 51, Vanderley 90)
Campomaiorense 2 (Marco Almeida 15, Rivas 45)

Maritimo 3 (Romeu 20, 90, Toni 26)
Boavista 0

Rio Ave 1 (Sergio China pen 28)
Sporting Braga 2 (Castanheira 4, Karoglan 39)

Farense 1 (Carlos Costa 68)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Luis Vouzela 34)

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Delfim 81)
Benfica 2 (Beto og 27, og 79)

Guimaraes 3 (Tito 15, Arley 85, Quim Berto 90)
Alverca 1 (Caju 53)

Monday, January 4

Academica 2 (Lim 15, 29)
Vitoria Setubal 0

Estrela Amadora 1 (Assis 66)
FC Porto 1 (Jardel 84)

Friday, January 15

Sporting Lisbon 0
Vitoria Setubal 0

Saturday, January 16

Academica 1 (Dario 80)
Chaves 2 (Luizao 21, Wanderlei 54)

Estrela Amadora 0
Benfica 1 (Saunders 88)

Alverca 2 (Filipe Azevedo pen 1, Nandinho 41)
Campomaiorense 1 (Jorginho 43)

Beira Mar 4 (Paulo Sergio 40, 45, Fary 49, Welder 85)
Sporting Braga 2 (Lobao 51, Silva 90)

Maritimo 3 (Toni 7, Tulipa 57, Alex 89)
Uniao Leiria 2 (Dinda 38, Reinaldo 39)

Farense 2 (Hassan Nader 43, Carlos Costa 80)
Salgueiros 1 (Paulinho 79)

Guimaraes 2 (Gilmar 17, Edmilson 55)
Boavista 3 (Isaias 10, Timofte 46, Quevedo 84)

Monday, January 18

Rio Ave 1 (Zahovic 1)
FC Porto 1 (Sergio China 42)

Friday, January 22

Uniao Leiria 0
Guimaraes 1 (Gilmar 62)

Saturday, January 23

Benfica 3 (Nuno Gomes 48, Cadete 81, Pepa 90)
Rio Ave 1 (Jacare 59)

Boavista 3 (Douala 3, Timofte 27, Quevedo 82)
Alverca 0

Chaves 2 (Wanderley 6, 59)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Simao 20, Beto 45)

Sunday, January 24

Campomaiorense 2 (Laelson 7, Isaias 29)
Academica 1 (Mauricio 75)

FC Porto 7 (Capucho 30, Jardel 37, 40, 53, 63, Joao Pinto 45, Zahovic 61)
Beira Mar 0

Salgueiros 2 (Celso 25, Abilio pen 52)
Maritimo 2 (Jorge Soares 45, Dani Diaz 90)

Vitoria Setubal 2 (Tonito 18, Nando 25)
Estrela Amadora 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	19	13	4	2	46	17	43
Benfica	19	13	3	3	41	13	42
Boavista	19	12	5	2	33	16	41
Sporting	19	9	7	3	34	18	34
Estrela Amadora	19	8	6	5	21	20	30
Uniao Leiria	19	8	4	7	19	16	28
Salgueiros	19	6	8	5	28	28	26
Setubal	19	7	4	8	17	24	25
Guimaraes	19	6	5	8	26	21	23
Braga	18	5	6	7	26	35	21
Farense	18	6	3	9	16	25	21
Alverca	19	4	8	7	17	25	20
Beira Mar	19	4	8	7	18	27	20
Rio Ave	19	5	5	9	16	29	20
Maritimo	19	4	7	8	21	25	19
Chaves	19	5	4	10	22	35	19
Campomaiorense	19	5	3	11	21	33	18
Academica	19	3	4	12	20	35	13

PORTUGUESE CUP – 4TH RND

Jan 10: Alverca 2 Camara de Lobos 1; Benfica 4 Academica 1; Campomaiorense 3 Sporting Braga 2; Estrela Amadora 0 Farense 0 (aet); Fafe 1 Vitoria Setubal 2; Gil Vicente 3 Sporting Lisbon 2; Juventude Evora 1 Boavista 3; FC Porto 4 Famalicao 2 (aet); Covilha 2 Salgueiros 4; Torreense 2 Chaves 0; Uniao Leiria 2 Rio Ave 1; Novas 1 Maritimo 3; Guimaraes 2 Moreirense 3; Beira Mar 4 Futebol Benfica 2.

REP IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Patricks	22	16	3	3	45	17	51
Cork	22	14	5	3	41	16	47
Shamrock	21	8	8	5	30	27	32
Finn Harps	21	7	9	5	28	25	30
Derry	21	7	7	7	27	24	28
Shelbourne	22	7	7	8	26	26	28
UCD	22	6	8	8	20	23	26
Bohemians	21	6	5	10	18	24	23
Dundalk	22	5	8	9	17	23	23
Bray	21	5	5	11	20	34	20
Sligo	21	3	9	9	21	33	18
Waterford	20	4	6	10	10	31	18

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	17	14	2	1	40	10	44
Dinamo	17	13	2	2	57	15	41
Steaua	17	10	4	3	31	15	34
National	17	11	0	6	37	24	33
Arges	17	10	2	5	34	19	32
Bacau	17	8	7	2	23	17	31
Otelul	17	9	1	7	26	19	28
Petrolul	17	8	2	7	26	24	26
Astra	17	7	4	6	20	15	25
Gloria	17	6	3	8	28	33	21
Ceahlaul	17	6	3	8	23	31	21
Onesti	17	6	3	8	25	35	21
Farul	17	6	1	10	20	32	19
U Craiova	17	4	5	8	20	24	17
Resita	17	3	6	8	13	36	15
Olimpia	17	2	3	12	13	34	9
U Cluj	17	2	3	12	10	43	9
Foresta	17	1	3	13	19	39	6

SCOTLAND

Sunday, December 20

Kilmarnock 2 (Wright 30, Durrant pen 87)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 8,180

Saturday, December 26

Dunfermline 1 (Shaw 53)
Aberdeen 2 (Inglis 52, Jess 75) Att: 7,873

Rangers 1 (Porrini 71)
St Johnstone 0 Att: 49,479

Kilmarnock 1 (Holt 27)
Hearts 0 Att: 10,668

Motherwell 2 (McMillan 55, Brannan 58)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 6,001

Dundee 0
Celtic 3 (O'Donnell 3, Riseth 12, Douglas og 56) Att: 10,043

Tuesday, December 29

Aberdeen 1 (Jess 31)
Motherwell 1 (McCulloch 67) Att: 15,269

St Johnstone 1 (Kane 81)
Dunfermline 1 (Smith pen 68) Att: 6,070

Dundee Utd 1 (Dodds 43)
Rangers 2 (Wilson 32, Wallace 90) Att: 18,114

Hearts 1 (Lilley 37)
Dundee 2 (Sharp pen 18, Falconer 42) Att: 13,383

Saturday, January 2

Motherwell 1 (Brannan 26)
Kilmarnock 2 (McCoist 15, McGowne 86) Att: 8,532

Dundee 1 (McSkimming 28)
Dundee Utd 3 (Dodds 10, Thompson 16, Olofsson 70) Att: 11,751

Dunfermline 0
Hearts 0 Att: 9,227

St Johnstone 4 (Bollan pen 44, Kernaghan 52, O'Neil 75, 84)
Aberdeen 1 (Buchan 25) Att: 8,971

Sunday, January 3

Rangers 2 (Amato 45, Wallace 58)
Celtic 2 (Stubbs 39, Larsson 66) Att: 50,059

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	21	13	5	3	39	19	44
Kilmarnock	21	11	7	3	30	12	40
Celtic	21	9	7	5	44	22	34
St Johnstone	22	8	9	5	28	28	33
Motherwell	22	6	8	8	21	29	26
Hearts	22	6	6	10	22	29	24
Aberdeen	22	6	6	10	23	35	24
Dundee	21	6	5	10	20	31	23
Dundee Utd	22	5	7	10	21	27	22
Dunfermline	22	2	12	8	17	33	18

SCOTTISH CUP

Jan 23: Aberdeen 0 Livingston 1; Ayr 3 Kilmarnock 0; Celtic 3 Airdrie 1; Rangers 2 Stenhousemuir 0; Greenock Morton 2 Dundee 1; Partick Thistle 1 Dunfermline 2; St Johnstone 1 Forfar 0.

Jan 24: Motherwell 3 Hearts 1.

SPAIN

Sunday, December 20

Alaves 1 (Azkoitia 68)
Salamanca 0 Att: 13,000

Atletico Madrid 0
Real Zaragoza 0 Att: 25,000

Espanyol 2 (Capdevila 35, Cristobal 75)
Valencia 1 (Farinos 42) Att: 23,400

Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 76)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 16,500

Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 36, 87)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 28,000

Mallorca 1 (Dani 55)
Racing Santander 1 (Victor 67) Att: 13,000

Valladolid 0
Barcelona 1 (Xavi 15) Att: 9,300

Tenerife 1 (Makaay 52)
Extremadura 1 (Velamazan 83) Att: 16,000

Villarreal 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 53) Att: 11,000

Saturday, January 2

Valencia 2 (Schwarz 20, Claudio Lopez 59)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 48,000

Sunday, January 3

Athletic Bilbao 2 (Ferreira 67, Urzaiz 88)
Valladolid 1 (Turiel 19) Att: 38,000

Barcelona 7 (Figo 19, Luis Enrique 36, 90, Rivaldo 57, 66, Oscar 86, 88)
Alaves 1 (Pablo pen 79) Att: 45,000

Celta Vigo 6 (Revivo 25, 84, Karpin 32, Penev 39, 75, Sanchez 63)
Oviedo 2 (Pompei 83, Moller 90) Att: 25,000

Extremadura 1 (Velamazan 30)
Mallorca 0 Att: 8,600

Racing Santander 2 (Ismael 69, Bestchastnych pen 88)
Atletico Madrid 3 (Correa 12, Jose Mari 30, Chamot 67) Att: 12,000

Betis Sevilla 4 (Finidi pen 32, pen 46, Alfonso 74, Jacques 84)
Villarreal 1 (Roberto pen 62) Att: 35,000

Real Madrid 4 (Raul 3, 78, Hierro pen 50, Savia 68)
Tenerife 0 Att: 50,000

Real Zaragoza 3 (Yordi 45, Aragon 73, Milosevic 79)
La Coruna 1 (Ziani 34) Att: 19,000

Salamanca 2 (Ramos pen 4, Munteanu 26)
Espanyol 3 (Nan Ribera 42, Posse 64, De Lucas pen 90) Att: 10,400

Wednesday, January 6

Real Madrid 3 (Raul 35, Suker 55, 72)
Salamanca 1 (Casartelli 29) Att: 75,000

Saturday, January 9

Barcelona 4 (Luis Enrique 23, Cocu 40, Rivaldo 52, 85)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Urzaiz 51, Guerrero 71) Att: 20,000

Sunday, January 10

Alaves 1 (Pablo pen 60)
Espanyol 1 (Capdevila 40) Att: 13,000

Atletico Madrid 5 (Correa 2, Serena 42, Aguilera 57, Roberto 69, Valeron 89)
Extremadura 0 Att: 50,000

La Coruna 1 (Pauleta 75)
Racing Santander 2 (Victor 44, Bestchastnych 85) Att: 12,000

Real Oviedo 2 (Dely Valdes 9, 33)
Valencia 2 (Moreno og 22, Milla 90) Att: 10,621

Real Sociedad 4 (Sa Pinto 50, Kovacevic 76, 79, Gracia 78)
Salamanca 0 Att: 23,140

Mallorca 2 (Ibagaza 10, Sanchis og 26)
Real Madrid 1 (Seedorf 46) Att: 18,500

Valladolid 2 (Peternac pen 35, 59)
Betis Sevilla 1 (Oli 88) Att: 13,300

Tenerife 0
Celta Vigo 2 (Karpin 65, Mazinho 83) Att: 18,000

Villarreal 1 (Alfaro pen 29)
Zaragoza 1 (Milosevic 87) Att: 14,000

Saturday, January 16

Celta Vigo 4 (Karpin 27, 57, Djorovic 86, Revivo 90)
Mallorca 2 (Ariel Lopez 23, Biagini 52) Att: 24,600

Sunday, January 17

Alaves 1 (Canabal 79)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Alkorta 27, Urzaiz 54) Att: 17,000

Espanyol 0
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 18,000

Extremadura 1 (Esposito 76)
La Coruna 2 (Turu Flores 5, Fran 75) Att: 9,000

Racing Santander 1 (Arzeno 49)
Villarreal 2 (Christiansen 39, Alfaro 75) Att: 13,240

Betis Sevilla 0
Barcelona 3 (Figo 2, Luis Enrique 34, Guardiola 80) Att: 40,000

Real Madrid 4 (Mijatovic 22, Morientes 76, 90, Ivan Campo 82)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Juninho 46, Crrea 85) Att: 70,000

Real Zaragoza 2 (Aguado 56, Milosevic 87)
Valladolid 0 Att: 18,000

Salamanca 1 (Pavlicic 85)
Real Oviedo 1 (Nadj 86) Att: 10,551

Valencia 1 (Claudio Lopez pen 36)
Tenerife 1 (Juanele pen 68) Att: 45,000

Saturday, January 23

Athletic Bilbao 0
Betis Sevilla 0 Att: 40,000

Sunday, January 24

Atletico Madrid 2 (Serena 14, Correa 62)
Celta Vigo 1 (Penev pen 85) Att: 45,000

Barcelona 3 (Cocu 8, Rivaldo 56, 87)
Zaragoza 1 (Milosevic 66) Att: 86,000

La Coruna 4 (Fran 10, Turu Flores 20, 70, Pauleta 36)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 35,000

Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 90)
Espanyol 1 (Posse 37) Att: 11,439

Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 41, 45)
Alaves 1 (Sivori 11) Att: 31,000

Mallorca 0
Valencia 1 (Claudio Lopez 49) Att: 15,000

Valladolid 0
Racing Santander 0 Att: 19,500

Tenerife 1 (Juanele pen 70)
Salamanca 0 Att: 16,000

Villarreal 1 (Roberto 21)
Extremadura 1 (Velamazan 2) Att: 17,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	19	10	4	5	40	22	34
Celta	19	9	7	3	38	22	34
Valencia	19	10	3	6	30	20	33
Atletico Madrid	19	9	5	5	34	21	32
Mallorca	19	9	5	5	20	13	32
Real Madrid	19	9	4	6	39	30	31
Deportivo	19	8	6	5	28	22	30
Athletic Bilbao	19	9	3	7	27	27	30
Real Sociedad	19	8	5	6	27	23	29
Zaragoza	19	8	4	7	25	24	28
Oviedo	19	7	6	6	24	27	27
Betis Sevilla	19	7	5	7	17	21	26
Villarreal	19	6	6	7	26	27	24
Espanyol	19	5	8	6	20	21	23
Racing Santander	19	5	7	7	21	24	22
Valladolid	19	5	4	10	16	25	19
Tenerife	19	3	8	8	19	29	17
Alaves	19	4	4	11	14	30	16
Salamanca	19	4	4	11	16	33	16
Extremadura	19	4	4	11	12	32	16

SPANISH CUP – 3RD RND

Jan 13: Benidorm 0 Tenerife 0
2-2 on agg. Benidorm through on away goals;
Levante 0 Las Palmas 0
Levante won 1-0 on agg;
Osasuna 1 Santander 0
Santander won 2-1 on agg;
Sevilla 1 Villarreal 3
Villarreal won 5-3 on agg;
Gijon 0 La Coruna 1
La Coruna won 2-1 on agg;
Badajoz 1 Valladolid 1
2-2 on agg. Valladolid won on penalties.

SPANISH CUP – 4TH RND

First legs
Jan 20: Athletic Bilbao 2 Racing Santander 2; Benidorm 0 Barcelona 2; Celta Vigo 0 La Coruna 1; Espanyol 4 Valladolid 2; Levante 0 Valencia 3; Betis Sevilla 0 Mallorca 1; Real Sociedad 1 Atletico Madrid 2.

Jan 21: Real Madrid 2 Villarreal 0.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	18	13	2	3	47	13	41
Besiktas	18	12	5	1	33	13	41
Galatasaray	17	11	4	2	47	19	37
Trabzonspor	18	11	4	3	29	17	37
Antalyaspor	18	9	4	5	25	18	31
Kocaelispor	18	9	4	5	22	19	31
Istanbulspor	18	8	4	6	31	23	28
Genclerbirligi	18	7	6	5	27	23	27
Gaziantepspor	18	6	6	6	25	24	24
Bursaspor	18	7	3	8	31	35	24
Samsunspor	18	6	3	9	22	33	21
Ankaragucu	18	6	2	10	21	25	20
Altay	17	5	3	9	22	32	18
Erzurum	18	4	6	8	20	39	18
Adanaspor	18	5	2	11	17	31	17
Sakaryaspor	18	2	5	11	15	31	11
Karabukspor	18	3	2	13	13	34	11
Dardanelspor	18	1	7	10	9	27	10

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	15	11	3	1	45	12	36
Shakhtar	15	11	0	4	45	15	33
Karpaty	15	8	5	2	24	13	29
Kryvbas	15	7	6	2	17	7	27
Metalurh M	15	6	4	5	18	13	22
CSKA	15	5	7	3	19	17	22
Metalurh D	15	6	4	5	19	20	22
Metalurh Z	15	6	3	6	24	29	21
Metalist	15	6	1	8	15	24	19
Tavriya	15	4	4	7	16	20	16
Vorskla	15	4	4	7	16	22	16
Zirka	15	4	4	7	13	19	16
Nyva	15	4	4	7	11	19	16
Dnipro	15	5	1	9	13	28	16
Mykolaiv	15	2	4	9	10	27	10
Prykarpattya	15	2	4	9	13	33	10

WALES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barry T	18	14	2	2	54	12	44
InterCable-Tel	20	10	5	5	35	17	35
Aberystwyth T	18	9	6	3	30	24	33
Cwmbran T	17	9	4	4	39	22	31
TNS	19	7	8	4	35	23	29
Newtown	18	7	7	4	28	20	28
Caernarfon T	18	6	8	4	24	29	26
Conwy U	18	6	5	7	28	31	23
Caersws	18	6	5	7	26	34	23
Bangor C	18	6	4	8	22	27	22
Carmarthen T	17	6	3	8	24	25	21
Haverfordwest	19	5	5	9	31	33	20
Connah's Quay	15	4	5	6	15	21	17
Rhyl	19	5	2	12	26	48	17
Afan Lido	16	4	4	8	13	24	16
Holywell T	19	2	9	8	22	44	15
Rhayader T	17	3	4	10	21	39	13

YUGOSLAVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	17	16	1	0	42	8	49
Obilic	17	13	4	0	40	9	43
Red Star	17	11	4	2	42	12	37
Vojvodina	17	10	1	6	33	18	31
Rad	17	8	4	5	18	20	28
Proleter	17	8	2	7	20	19	26
Hajduk	17	6	5	6	22	21	23
Zemun	17	7	1	9	24	35	22
OFK	17	5	6	6	25	27	21
Radnicki K	17	6	3	8	26	29	21
Sartid	17	5	6	6	17	21	21
Zeleznik	17	6	2	9	24	34	20
Milicionar	17	5	4	8	29	30	19
Buducnost	17	5	4	8	23	30	19
Mogren	17	3	6	8	15	32	15
Pristina	17	4	1	12	18	36	13
Spartak	17	4	0	13	26	43	12
Radnicki N	17	2	4	11	15	35	10

GOLDEN SHOE

STANDINGS AT JANUARY 6, 1999

	Gls	Pts
ALBANIA* (after 15 matches)		
Artan Bano (Lushnja)	13	13
Rigels Qose (Skenderbeu Korce)	9	9
ARMENIA* (26 matches)		
Ara Akopyan (Dvin Artashat)	20	20
Ara Adamyan (Shirak Gyumri)	13	13
Artur Petrosyan (Shirak Gyumri)	12	12
Shirak Sarikyan (Tsement Ararat)	12	12
Aik Akopyan (Dvin Artashat)	11	11
AUSTRIA** (21 matches)		
Eduard Glieder (Salzburg)	12	18
Geir Frigaard (Linz ASK)	10	15
Mario Haas (Sturm Graz)	9	13.5
Christian Mayrleb (Austria Wien)	9	13.5
Rene Wagner (Rapid Vienna)	8	12
Hannes Reinmayr	8	12
AZERBAIJAN* (18 matches)		
Vidadi Rzayev (Kepez Ganja)	16	16
Gasan Abdullyev (Kepez Ganja)	12	12
Vadim Vasilyev (Baki Fehlesi Mastagi)	12	12
Nazim Aliyev (Dynamo Baku)	11	11
Zhaba Tsyklauri (Turan Tobuz)	10	10
BELARUS* (28 matches)		
Sergei Yaromko (Torpedo Minsk)	19	19
Roman Vasilyuk (Dynamo Brest)	18	18
Valery Stripeikis (Naftan-Devon Nov.)	18	18
Pavel Shavrov (Shkhtyor Soligorsk)	15	15
Dmitry Balashyov (Belshina Bobruisk)	14	14
BELGIUM** (19 matches)		
Jan Koeller (Lokeren)	13	19.5
Souleymane Oulare (Genk)	12	18
Jochen Janssen (Westerlo)	11	16.5
Salif Keita (Kortrijk)	9	13.5
Toni Brogno (Westerlo)	9	13.5
Zoran Ban (Mouscron)	9	13.5
Erik Van Meir (Lierse)	9	13.5
Branko Strupar (Genk)	9	13.5
BULGARIA* (14 matches)		
Dimcho Belyakov (Litex Lovech)	12	12
Hristo Marashliev (Levski Kjustendil)	9	9

	Gls	Pts
CROATIA (17 matches)**		
Zvonimir Deranja (Hajduk Split)	11	16.5
Josko Popovic (Sibenik)	10	15
Igor Musa (Rijeka)	9	13.5
Edin Mujcin (Croatia Zagreb)	8	12
Miljenko Mumiek (Varteks Varazdin)	8	12
CYPRUS* (13 matches)		
Slobodan Krcmarevic (Anor. Famagusta)	19	19
Rhiner Raufmann (Omonia Nicosia)	16	16
Mirko Mihic (Nea Salamina Famagusta)	11	11
Panicos Xiorouppas (AEK Larnaca)	11	11
Boban Gidanov (Omonia Nicosia)	11	11
CZECH REPUBLIC (15 matches)**		
Horst Siegl (Sparta Prague)	11	16.5
Pavel Verbir (Teplice)	9	13.5
Viteslav Tuma (Petra Drnovice)	8	12
Ludek Zelenka (Viktoria Zizkov)	8	12
Vratislav Lokvenc (Sparta Prague)	8	12
DENMARK (18 matches)**		
Chris Hermansen (AB)	15	22.5
Bo Hansen (Brondby)	12	18
Soren Frederiksen (AaB Aalborg)	11	16.5
Henrik Pedersen (Silkeborg)	10	15
Ebbe Sand (Brondby)	10	15
Heine Fernandez (Viborg)	10	15
ENGLAND* (20 matches)**		
Dion Dublin (Aston Villa)	12	24
Michael Owen (Liverpool)	12	24
Hamilton Ricard (Middlesbrough)	10	20
Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Leeds)	10	20
Gianfranco Zola (Chelsea)	9	18
ESTONIA* (14 matches)		
Konstantin Kolbassenko (Tallinna S)	12	12
Indrek Zelinski (Flora Tallinn)	9	9
Andrei Krolov (Tallinna Sadam)	8	8
FAROE ISLANDS* (18 matches)		
Jakupa Borg (B36 Torshavn)	20	20
Suni Fridi Johannesen (HB Torshavn)	18	18
Kurt Moerkoere (Kl Klaksvik)	18	18
John Petersen (B36 Torshavn)	17	17
Allan Mocrkoere (HB Torshvn)	17	17
FINLAND* (27 matches)		
Matti Kiukka (ROPS)	11	11
Valeri Popovitch (Haka Valkeakoski)	10	10
Oleg Ivanov (Haka Valkeakoski)	10	10
Kalle Lehtinen (PK-35)	9	9
Sukru Uzuner (FinnPa Helsinki)	9	9
FRANCE* (20 matches)**		
Sylvain Wiltord (Bordeaux)	12	24
Lilian Laslandes (Bordeaux)	12	24
Florian Maurice (Marseille)	11	22
Pierre-Yves Andre (Bastia)	9	18
Shabani Nonda (Rennes)	9	18
GEORGIA* (15 matches)		
Zurab Ionanidze (Torpedo Kutaisi)	13	13
Mikhail Ashvetia (Dynamo Tbilisi)	13	13
Hamlet Chivchivadze (Kolkheti 1913)	11	11
Alexander Kaidarashvili (Dila Gori)	9	9
David Makharadze (Guria Lanchkhuti)	9	9
GERMANY* (18 matches)**		
Giovane Elber (Bayern Munich)	11	22
Andrzej Juskowiak (VfL Wolfsburg)	11	22
Michael Preetz (Hertha Berlin)	11	22
Bernhard Winkler (Munich 1860)	10	20
Olaf Marschall (Kaiserslautern)	9	18
Ulf Kirsten (Bayer Leverkusen)	9	18
Toni Polster (Borussia MG)	9	18
GREECE* (12 matches)**		
Denis Nikolaidis (AEK Athens)	12	24
Paolo Andrioli (Ionikos)	11	22
Leczek Pisz (Kavala)	8	16
HOLLAND* (19 matches)**		
Ruud Van Nistelrooy (PSV Eindhoven)	16	32
Nikos Mahlas (Vitesse)	12	24
Luc Nilis (PSV Eindhoven)	12	24
Peter Van Houdt (Roda JC)	11	22
Jan Vennegoor (Twente)	10	20
Michael Mols (Utrecht)	10	20
HUNGARY (17 matches)**		
Bela Illes (MTK Budapest)	13	19.5
Gabor Egressy (Diosgyor)	13	19.5
Robert Waltner (Videoton)	10	15
Sandor Kulcsar (Diosgyor)	9	13.5
Krisztian Kenesei (MTK Budapest)	9	13.5

	Gls	Pts
ICELAND* (16 matches)		
Steingrimur Johannesson (IBV Vest.)	16	16
Tomas Ingi Tomasson (Throttur Reyk.)	14	14
Asmundur Arnarsson (Fram Reykjavik)	8	8
ISRAEL* (15 matches)		
Alon Mizrahi (Maccabi Haifa)	14	14
Ofer Shitrit (Betar Jerusalem)	14	14
Motti Kakkon (Hapoel Petah Tikva)	13	13
Amir Turjeman (Irony Ashdod)	13	13
Andrej Koubika (Maccabi Tel Aviv)	11	11
ITALY* (14 matches)**		
Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina)	14	28
Hernan Crespo (Parma)	9	18
Marcio Amoroso (Udinese)	8	16
Marco Delvecchio (Roma)	8	16
Filippo Inzaghi (Juventus)	8	16
LATVIA* (27 matches)		
Victor Dorbrecov (Liepaja Metalurgs)	23	23
Roman Grigorchuuk (Dinaburga)	21	21
Mihail Miholap (Skonto Riga)	20	20
Marian Pahar (Skonto Riga)	19	19
LITHUANIA* (15 matches)		
Arturas Fomenka (Kareda)	11	11
Igoris Marinas (Zhalgiris)	11	11
LUXEMBOURG* (11 matches)		
Patrick Grettnich (Aris Bonnevoie)	9	9
Frederic Cicchirillo (Sporting Mertzig)	9	9
Marc Delazzer (Hobscheid)	9	9
MACEDONIA* (13 matches)		
Dragan Simovski (Sileks Kratovo)	10	10
Vanco Trajcov (Vardar Skopje)	9	9
Roberto Oliveira (Pobeda Prilep)	9	9
MALTA* (13 matches)		
Gilbert Agius (Valetta)	13	13
D. Raguin (Pieta Hotspurs)	8	8
Ivan Woods (Sliema)	8	8
MOLDOVA* (18 matches)		
Sergei Rogachev (Sherif Tiraspol)	18	18
NORTHERN IRELAND* (22 matches)		
Dessie Gorman (Newry Town)	13	13
Stephen Baxter (Glenavon)	11	11
David Larmour (Linfield)	9	9
Vinny Arkins (Portadown)	9	9
Crawford McCrae (Crusaders)	8	8
NORWAY (26 matches)**		
Sigurd Rushfeldt (Rosenborg)	27	40.5
Rune Lange (Tromso)	20	30
Jostein Flo (Stromsgodset)	19	28.5
Petter Belsvik (Stabaek)	19	28.5
Andreas Lund (Molde)	16	24
Rikardur Dadason (Viking)	16	24
POLAND (18 matches)**		
Piotr Reiss (Lech Poznan)	12	18
Artur Wichniarek (Widzew Lodz)	11	16.5
Tomasz Frankowski (Wisla Krakow)	11	16.5
Grzegorz Krol (Amiva Wronki)	9	13.5
Bartosz Karwan (Legia Warsaw)	8	12
Mariusz Srutwa (Ruch Chorzow)	8	12
PORTUGAL* (17 matches)**		
Mario Jardel (Porto)	18	36
Nuno Gomes (Benfica)	15	30
Elpidio Silva (Braga)	11	22
Ion Timofte (Boavista)	9	18
Ivaylo Iordanov (Sporting Lisbon)	8	16
REP OF IRELAND* (18 matches)		
Trevor Molloy (St Patrick's)	12	12
Ian Gilzean (St Patrick's)	10	10
Tony Sheridan (Shelbourne)	8	8
James Mulligan (Finn Harps)	8	8
ROMANIA* (19 matches)		
Ionel Ganea (Gloria Bistrita)	17	17
Marius Sumudica (Rapid Bucharest)	13	13
Constantin Barbu (Arges Pitesti)	13	13
Adrian Mihalcea (Dinamo Bucharest)	11	11
RUSSIA (30 matches)**		
Oleg Veretennikov (Rotor Volgograd)	22	33
Georgi Demetradze (Alania Vladikavkaz)	14	21
Yuri Matveyev (Rostselmash Rostov)	14	21
Vladimir Kulik (CSKA Moscow)	14	21
Oleg Teryokhin (Moscow Dynamo)	12	18

	Gls	Pts
SCOTLAND* (21 matches)		
Henrik Larsson (Celtic)	14	14
Rod Wallace (Rangers)	13	13
Eoin Jess (Aberdeen)	12	12
Billy Dodds (Dundee Utd)	8	8
SLOVAKIA (15 matches)**		
Martin Fabus (Ozeta Trencin)	10	15
Norbert Hrncar (Slovan Bratislava)	8	12
Szilard Nemeth (FC Kosice)	8	12
Peter Babnic (Inter Bratislava)	8	12
SLOVENIA* (16 matches)		
Novica Nikcevic (Nova Gorica)	11	11
Dean Baranja (Mura)	8	8
Issah Moro (Beltinci)	8	8
Senad Tiganj (Korotan)	8	8
SPAIN* (16 matches)**		
Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao)	10	20
Raul (Real Madrid)	9	18
Victor Sanchez (Racing Santander)	8	16
Roy Makaay (Tenerife)	8	16
Claudio Lopez (Valencia)	8	16
Rivaldo (Barcelona)	8	16
SWEDEN* (26 matches)		
Arild Stavrum (Helsingborg)	18	18
Hans Berggren (Hammarby)	13	13
Christer Mattiasson (Elfsborg)	12	12
Matts Lilienberg (Halmstad)	11	11
Dans Sahlin (Orebro)	10	10
SWITZERLAND (22 matches)**		
Alexandre Rey (Servette)	12	18
Roumen Ivanov (Aarau)	10	15
Didier Tholot (Sion)	10	15
Christian Jimenez (Lugano)	9	13.5
Gaetano Giallanza (Lugano)	8	12
Frederic Chassot (FC Zurich)	8	12
Julio Rossi (Lugano)	8	12
TURKEY (17 matches)**		
Elvir Balic (Fenerbahce)	12	18
Hakan Sukur (Galatasaray)	11	16.5
Umit Karan (Genclerbirligi)	11	16.5
Ohene Kennedy (Ankaragucu)	9	13.5
Gheorghe Hagi (Galatasaray)	8	12
Murat Salar (Bursaspor)	8	12
UKRAINE (15 matches)**		
Andrii Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo)	10	15
Andrii Vorobei (Shakhtar Donetsk)	9	13.5
Valentin Poltavets (Metalurg Zaporizhya)	9	13.5
Serhii Rebrov (Kyiv Dynamo)	8	12
WALES* (15 matches)		
Eiofion Williams (Barry Town)	18	18
Richard Gay (Haverford West)	13	13
John Toner (Conwy Utd)	9	9
Richard Jones (Barry Town)	9	9
Peter Hughes (Holywell Town)	8	8
YUGOSLAVIA* (14 matches)		
Dejan Osmanovic (Hajduk Kula)	12	12
Mihailo Pjanovic (OFK Belgrade)	11	11
Zoran Tomic (Zemun Belgrade)	9	9
Antal Puhalak (Spartak Subotica)	9	9
Sasa Ilic (Partizan Belgrade)	8	8

EUROPE'S TOP 5

1 Sigurd Rushfeldt (Rosenborg, Norway)	40.5pts
2 Mario Jardel (Porto, Portugal)	36
3 Oleg Veretennikov (Rotor Volgograd, Russia)	33
4 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (PSV, Holland)	32
5 Rune Lange (Tromso, Norway)	30
Nuno Gomes (Benfica, Portugal)	30

* Points allocated at 1 per goal
** Points allocated at 1.5 per goal
*** Points allocated at 2 per goal
Information supplied by Reuters

SOUTH AMERICA

MERCOSUR CUP

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 26 – Sao Paulo (Bra)
Palmeiras (Bra) **3** (Cleber 9, Oseas 53, Nunes 86)
Cruzeiro (Bra) **1** (Fabio Junior 3)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 27,775. **Ref:** C. Cerdeira (Bra)
Palmeiras: Velloso – Arce, Junior Bahiano, Cleber (Tiago 57), Junior, Roque Junior, Rogerio, Zinho, Alex (Pedrinho 58), Paulo Nunes, Oseas (Magrao 75).
Cruzeiro: Dida – Gustavo, Marcelo Djian, Wilson Gottardo (Joao Carlos 45), Gilberto, Valdir, Richardinho (Alex Alves 58), Djair, Valdo (Caio 68), Fabio Junior, Muller.
(One win each; Final went to a play-off)

Play-off

Dec 29 - Sao Paulo (Bra)
Palmeiras (Bra) **1** (Arce 61)
Cruzeiro (Bra) **0**
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,000. **Ref:** L. Almeida (Bra)
Palmeiras: Velloso – Arce, Junior Bahiano, Roque Junior, Junior, Rogerio, Tiago, Alex (Almir 45), Zinho, Paulo Nunes, Oseas (Pedrinho 77).
Cruzeiro: Dida – Gustavo, Marcelo Djian, Joao Carlos, Gilberto, Marcos Paulo, Richardinho (Caio 71), Valdo, Muller (Alex Alves 71) Fabio Junior, Marcelo Ramos.
Sent off: Marcelo Ramos 80min.

BRAZIL

National championship Final

Dec 23: *(3rd leg)* Corinthians 2 Cruzeiro 0
Corinthians win championship (1st and 2nd legs both drawn)

CHILE

Championship runners-up play-off

Dec 21: Universidad de Chile 0 Universidad Catolica 0
Dec 24: Universidad Catolica 0 Universidad de Chile 0
Univ Catolica won 4-2 on penalties and qualify for the Libertadores Cup

ECUADOR

National championship Final

Dec 24: Emelec 1 Liga Deportiva Quito 0
Dec 27: Liga Deportivo Quito 7 Emelec 0
Liga won 7-1 on aggregate

PERU

National championship Final

Dec 23: *(2nd leg)* Universitario 2 Sporting Cristal 1
Agg 3-3. Universitario won 4-2 on penalties

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Union Tachira	22	15	5	2	42	21	50
Estudiantes Merida	22	13	5	4	38	22	44
Caracas FC	21	10	5	6	30	23	35
Univ. Los Andes	22	10	4	8	35	22	34
Inter Lara	22	10	4	8	32	32	34
Carabobo	22	8	6	8	22	24	30
Nacional	22	7	8	8	30	27	28
Nueva Cadiz	22	7	6	9	26	30	27
Italchacao	21	7	4	10	23	28	25
Zamora	22	4	8	10	26	36	20
Mineros Guayana	22	5	5	12	30	42	20
Minerven	22	4	3	15	14	41	15

AFRICA

NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

Eritrea 0
Cameroon 0

Ghana 1 (Akunnor 54)
Mozambique 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Mozambique	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Cameroon	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Eritrea	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

04.10.98 Cameroon-Ghana 1-3
04.10.98 Mozambique-Eritrea 3-1
23.01.99 Eritrea-Cameroon....0-0
24.01.99 Ghana-Mozambique....1-0
28.02.99 Cameroon-Mozambique
28.02.99 Ghana-Eritrea
10.04.99 Eritrea-Ghana
11.04.99 Mozambique-Cameroon
06.06.99 Cameroon-Eritrea
06.06.99 Mozambique-Ghana
19.06.99 Eritrea-Mozambique
20.06.99 Ghana-Cameroon

Group 2

Sierra Leone v Togo *postponed*

Guinea 1 (Oulare 30)
Morocco 1 (Hadji 44)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Togo	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Guinea	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Sierra Leone	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

03.10.98 Morocco-Sierra Leone 3-0
04.10.98 Togo-Guinea 2-0
24.01.99 Guinea-Morocco 1-1
tba Sierra Leone-Togo
28.02.99 Guinea-Sierra Leone
28.02.99 Togo-Morocco
10.04.99 Morocco-Togo
10.04.99 Sierra Leone-Guinea
05.06.99 Morocco-Guinea
06.06.99 Togo-Sierra Leone
19.06.99 Sierra Leone-Morocco
20.06.99 Guinea-Togo

Group 3

Congo 0
Mali 0

Ivory Coast 3 (Diallo 1, 89, Diomande 32)
Namibia 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Congo	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Mali	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Namibia	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

03.10.98 Namibia-Congo....0-1
04.10.98 Mali-Ivory Coast....0-1
24.01.99 Ivory Coast-Namibia 3-0
24.01.99 Congo-Mali 0-0
28.02.99 Congo-Ivory Coast
11.04.99 Mali-Namibia
11.04.99 Ivory Coast-Congo
08.05.99 Namibia-Mali
05.06.99 Namibia-Ivory Coast
06.06.99 Mali-Congo
20.06.99 Ivory Coast-Mali
20.06.99 Congo-Namibia

Group 4

Angola 3 (Akwa 7, 51, 89)
Gabon 1 (Mouloungui 34)

Mauritius 1 (Periatambee 56)
South Africa 1 (Masinga 44)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Angola	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Gabon	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Mauritius	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

03.10.98 South Africa-Angola 1-0
04.10.98 Gabon-Mauritius 2-0
23.01.99 Mauritius-South Africa 1-1
24.01.99 Angola-Gabon....3-1
27.02.99 South Africa-Gabon
28.02.99 Angola-Mauritius
11.04.99 Gabon-South Africa
11.04.99 Mauritius-Angola
05.06.99 South Africa-Mauritius
06.06.99 Gabon-Angola
20.06.99 Angola-South Africa
20.06.99 Mauritius-Gabon

Group 5

Nigeria 2 (Lawal 38, Finidi George 70)
Burundi 0

Senegal 1 (Keita 31)
Burkina Faso 1 (Kambou 54)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Burundi	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Burkina Faso	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Senegal	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

04.10.98 Burkina Faso-Nigeria 0-0
13.12.98 Burundi-Senegal 1-0
23.01.99 Nigeria-Burundi....2-0
23.01.99 Senegal-Burkina Faso....1-1
27.02.99 Senegal-Nigeria
28.02.99 Burundi-Burkina Faso
10.04.99 Nigeria-Senegal
11.04.99 Burkina Faso-Burundi
06.06.99 Burkina Faso-Senegal
06.06.99 Burundi-Nigeria
19.06.99 Nigeria-Burkina Faso
20.06.99 Burundi-Senegal

Group 6

DR Congo 2 (Kanyengele 15, 85)
Kenya 1 (Okoth 66)

Madagascar 1 (Rasanaivo 65)
Zambia 2 (Kilambe 85, Milanzi 87)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Zambia	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Kenya	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Madagascar	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

03.10.98 Kenya-Madagascar 1-1
04.10.98 Zambia-DR Congo 1-1
24.01.99 Madagascar-Zambia 1-2
24.01.99 DR Congo-Kenya 2-1
27.02.99 Kenya-Zambia
28.02.99 Madagascar-DR Congo
10.04.99 Zambia-Kenya
11.04.99 DR Congo-Madagascar
05.06.99 Kenya-DR Congo
05.06.99 Zambia-Madagascar
20.06.99 DR Congo-Zambia
20.06.99 Madagascar-Kenya

Group 7

Algeria 0
Tunisia 1 (Rouissi 44)

Liberia 2 (Roberts 20, Jebrow 38)
Uganda 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Liberia	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Uganda	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Algeria	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

02.10.98 Uganda-Algeria....2-1
04.10.98 Tunisia-Liberia....2-1
24.01.99 Algeria-Tunisia....0-1
24.01.99 Liberia-Uganda 2-0
28.02.99 Tunisia-Uganda
28.02.99 Liberia-Algeria
09.04.99 Algeria-Liberia
10.04.99 Uganda-Tunisia
05.06.99 Uganda-Liberia
05.06.99 Tunisia-Algeria
18.06.99 Algeria-Uganda
20.06.99 Liberia-Tunisia

AFRICAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary Round

Red Sea (Eritrea) v Rayon Sport (Rwanda)
ASC Ndiambour (Senegal) v Invincible Eleven (Liberia)
USFA Yennega (Burkina Faso) v Dragons l'Oueme (Benin)
El Nguema (Equatorial Guinea) v Santana FC (Sao Tome e Principe)
Telcom Wanderers (Malawi) v Scouts Club (Mauritius)
Saint Louissiene (Reunion) v Red Stars (Seychelles)
Cotontchad (Chad) v Al Mahali (Libya)
Notwane (Botswana) v Lesotho Defence Force (Lesotho)
Real Banjul (Gambia) v Guinea representative

First Round

Songka (Tanzania) v Al Ahli (Egypt)
Red Sea or Rayon Sport v AFC Leopards (Kenya)
ASC Ndiambour or Invincible Eleven v Raja Casablanca (Morocco)
Djoliba (Mali) v Cotonsport (Cameroon)
FC105 Libreville (Gabon) v ASEC Abidjan (Ivory Coast)
USFA Yennega or Dragons l'Oueme v USM El Harrach (Algeria)
El Nguema or Santana FC v Hearts of Oak (Ghana)
Nakivubo Villa (Uganda) v EELPA (Ethiopia)
Real Banjul or Guinea representative v Shooting Stars (Nigeria)
Costa do Sol (Mozambique) v Daring Club Motema Pembe (DR Congo)
Telcom Wanderers or Scouts Club v Mamelodi Sundowns (South Africa)
Saint Louissiene or Red Stars v DSA (Madagascar)
Cotontchad or Al Mahali v Esperance (Tunisia)
Nchanga Rangers (Zambia) v El Hilal (Sudan)
Vital'O (Burundi) v Primiero Agosto (Angola)
Notwane or Lesotho Defence Force v Dynamos (Zimbabwe)

Preliminary round first legs January 29-31; return legs February 12-14.
First round first legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28.

AFRICAN CUP-WINNERS CUP

Preliminary Round

Anges Fatima (Central African Republic) v Union Vesper (Equatorial Guinea)
Mogas '90 (Benin) v LPRC (Liberia)
Bata Bullets (Malawi) v Hinsta (Eritrea)
Djivan (Madagascar) v Botswana Defence Force XI (Botswana)
Reunion representative v Arsenal (Lesotho)
Fire Brigade (Mauritius) v Seychelles representative

First round

WA Tlemcen (Algeria) v Al Shatte (Libya)
Guinea representative v Mogas '90 or LPRC
Royal Armed Forces (Morocco) v ASC Yeggo (Senegal)
Wikki Tourists (Nigeria) v Renaissance (Chad)
Africa Sports (Ivory Coast) v Stade Malien (Mali)
Simba FC (Uganda) v Tanzania Stars (Tanzania)
Cameroon representative v Anges Fatima or Union Vesper
Club Africain (Tanzania) v ASF Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso)
Zambia representative v Fire Brigade or Seychelles representative
Coffee FC (Ethiopia) v Inter Stars (Burundi)
Matare (Kenya) v Bata Bullets or Hinstra
Petro Atletico (Angola) v AS Dragons (DR Congo)
Maxaquene (Mozambique) v Reunion representative or Arsenal
Orlando Pirates (South Africa) or Djivan or Botswana Defence Force
Al Masry (Egypt) v Al Merreikh (Sudan)
Asante Kotoko (Ghana) v Ndzimba (Gabon)

Preliminary round first legs January 29-31; return legs February 12-14.
First round first legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28.

CONFEDERATION OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL CUP

First Round

US Medina (Algeria) v Guinea representative
Al Ahli (Sudan) v Insurance (Ethiopia)
Canon Yaounde (Cameroon) v APR FC (Rwanda)
Mumias Sugar (Kenya) v Ferroviario Beira (Mozambique)
Zamalek (Egypt) v Elite FC (Burundi)
Stade Tamponnaise (Reunion) v ASFTM (Madagascar)
Accra Great Olympics (Ghana) v Etoile Filante (Burundi)
Vita Club (DR Congo) v Desportivo Mongomo (Equatorial Guinea)
Wydad Casablanca (Morocco) v Al Ahli Benghazi (Libya)
Diaraf Dakar (Senegal) v Man (Ivory Coast)
Kwaru United (Ghana) v Young Africans (Tanzania)
Angola representative v Police XI (Botswana)
Etoile Sahel (Tunisia) v Centre Salif Keita (Mali)
Mediaw Megbi (Ethiopia) v Express SC (Uganda)
Zambia representative v Royal Leopards (Swaziland)
CS Sfaxien (Tunisia) v Energie Sports (Benin)

First legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28

ASIA

JAPAN

J.LEAGUE – DIVISION PLAY-OFFS

Dec 2: Avispa Fukuoka 1 Consadole Sapporo 0
Dec 5: Consadole Sapporo 0 Avispa Fukuoka 3
Avispa win 4-0 on agg. Consadole play in Division 2 in 1999.

EMPEROR'S CUP

(*All games at neutral venues*)

Third round

Dec 13: Jubilo Iwata 2 Omiya Ardija 0; Consadole Sapporo 2 Vissel Kobe 1 (aet); Ventforet Kofu 6 Cerezo Osaka 4; Yokohama Flugels 4 Otsuka 2; Kashima Antlers 3 Tsukuba University 1; Bellmare Hiratsuka 2 Tokyo Gas 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Brummel Sendai 1 Yokohama Marinos 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 3 Kwansei Gakuin Univ 1; Montedio Yamagata 2 Gamba Osaka 1; Honda 2 JEF United Ichihara 0; Verdy Kawasaki 1 Oita 0; Urawa Reds 4 Albirex Niigata 1; Kashiwa Reysol 3 Sagan Tosu 1; Avispa Fukuoka 3 Kyoto Purple Sanga 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 5 Mito Hollyhock 0.

Fourth round

Dec 20: Jubilo Iwata 3 Consadole Sapporo 2; Yokohama Flugels 3 Ventforet Kofu 0; Kashima Antlers 3 Bellmare Hiratsuka 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3 Brummel Sendai 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 3 Montedio Yamagata 2; Verdy Kawasaki 3 Honda 1; Urawa Reds 3 Kashiwa Reysol 1; Shimizu S-Pulse 3 Avispa Fukuoka 2.

Quarter-finals

Dec 23: Yokohama Flugels 2 Jubilo Iwata 1; Kashima Antlers 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 (aet); Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Verdy Kawasaki 1 (aet); Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Urawa Reds 0.

Semi-finals

Dec 27: Yokohama Flugels 1 Kashima Antlers 0; Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1.

Final

Jan 1: Yokohama Flugels 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 1

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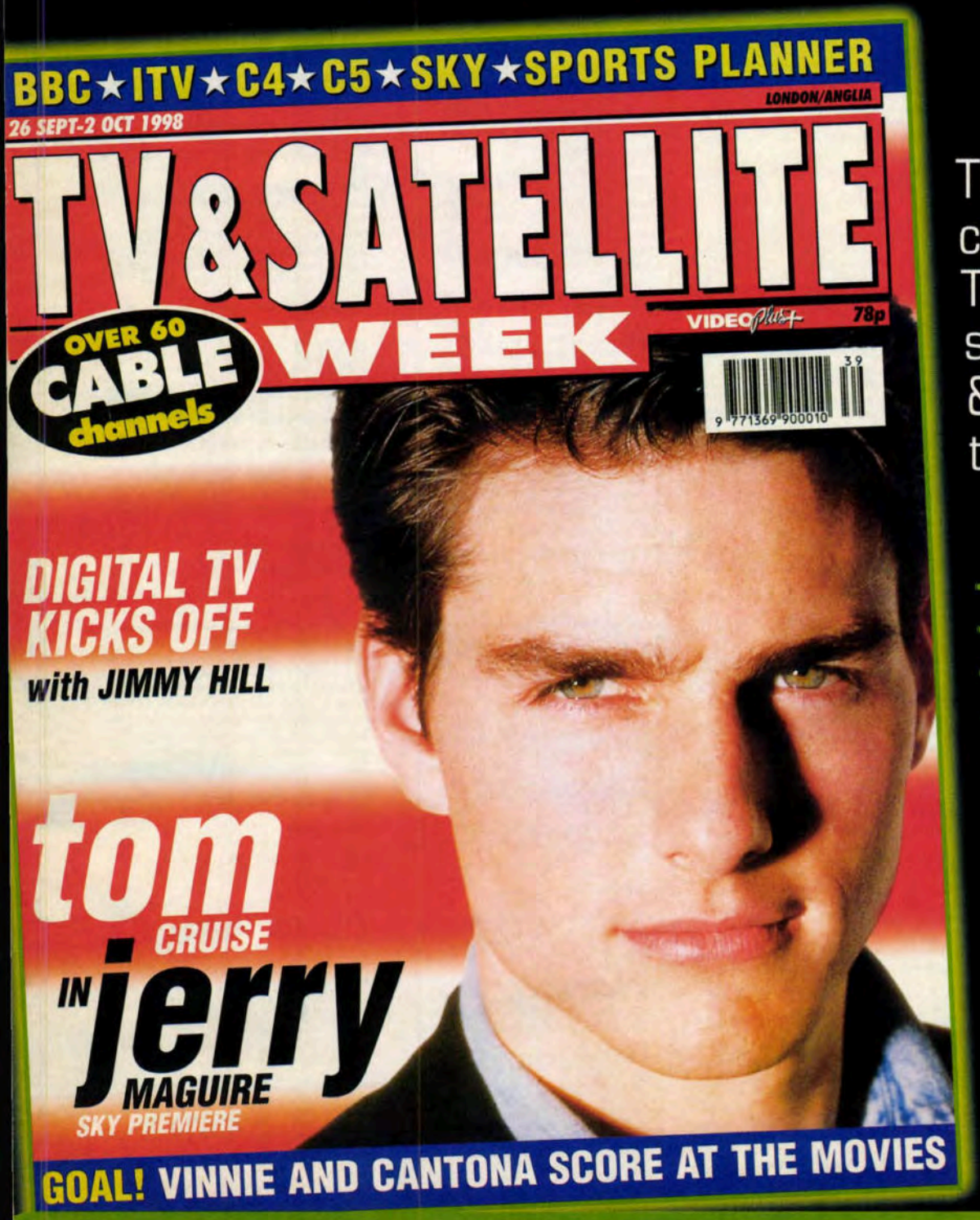

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Brian Glanville's LAST WORD

'The likes of Glenn Hoddle even have an assistant; perhaps to keep them from feeling lonely'

For 'full-time' read 'filling time'

OLEG ROMANTSEV and Vanderley Luxemburgo have struck a blow for common sense. Each, when made national team manager, the first for Russia, the second for Brazil, insisted that he carry on as a club coach, Romantsev with Moscow Spartak, Luxemburgo with Corinthians of Sao Paulo.

Admittedly, Luxemburgo, appointed to lead the national team soon after Mario Zagallo had vacated the post, agreed that he'd give up the club job at the end of 1998 (he duly announced, in early January, that he was to concentrate solely on the national team but would act as a special adviser to Corinthians' new coach). But the fact is that national team managerships never have been and never will be a full-time job. Instead, they've always seemed to me to be a perfect illustration of Parkinson's Law: work expands to fill the time allotted to it.

This means that almost any national team manager would be able to try to blind you with science, insisting his schedule was so full that he scarcely had time to turn round. Why, the likes of Glenn Hoddle even have an assistant; perhaps to keep them from feeling lonely. It's hard to think of a more valid reason.

England did not have a full-time manager until 1946, when the job went to Walter Winterbottom, an ex-Manchester United centre-half, RAF officer and physical training expert, who readily admitted that, for him, his more important job was that of director of coaching. This at least gave him something to fill his time.

Before the Second World War, England did pretty well against foreign teams, even those managed by full-timers such as Italy's formidable *commissario tecnico*, Vittorio Pozzo. (Admittedly, England did not enter the World Cup until 1950.) When Italy and England met for the first time, in Rome in 1933, Pozzo was surprised to see his friend Herbert Chapman of Arsenal emerging at half-time from the England dressing-room. When he asked him what he was about, Chapman replied, "I'm doing for my team the same as you are doing for yours." Although, in Chapman's case, the role was wholly unofficial. The game ended 1-1.

All through his career, Winterbottom had to coach teams chosen by a committee. But remember that not until 1953, during Winterbottom's reign, did England lose at home to a foreign competitor. (Yes, I know the Republic of Ireland won at Everton in 1949, but that was something of a domestic affair.)

Winterbottom survived the humiliation of defeat by the USA in the 1950 World Cup in Belo Horizonte, and the two thrashings by Hungary – 6-3 at Wembley in 1953, 7-1 in Budapest six months later. He seemed to have learned little in the period between the games.

It is worth noting that when little George Raynor, a coach from Yorkshire, took Sweden to Budapest a few weeks before the Hungarians won at Wembley, and promised to paint Stalin's moustache red on his statue if Sweden won, they got a notable 2-2 draw.

It's also worth remembering that the Holland teams of 1974 and 1978, both beaten in the World Cup Final, had managers who joined them only on the eve of the finals: Rinus Michels, from Barcelona, in 1974, and Ernst Happel, an Austrian, from Club Brugge, four years later.

Doubling up...until recently, Vanderley Luxemburgo was coach of both Corinthians and Brazil

Insult to injury...Uriah Rennie merely booked Youds for scything down Bergkamp

Crying foul on new directive

DURING France 98, Sepp Blatter bullied and cajoled the unfortunate, confused referees to send players off automatically for a foul tackle from behind. It didn't work then and it isn't working now.

There could scarcely have been a more blatant instance of it than during the game at The Valley between Charlton and Arsenal. Eddie Youds, the Charlton centre-back, scythed down poor Dennis Bergkamp with such an appalling intervention from behind that he was ruled out for several games. Uriah Rennie, such a disappointing referee this season after looking so good in the previous one, ineptly gave Youds no more than a yellow card.

Rennie also was sadly amiss when Neil Redfearn and Patrick Vieira clashed. I've no desire to make a case for Vieira, a noted recidivist who was foolish enough to swing back an elbow when he was fouled from behind. But Redfearn's subsequent reaction was deplorable. Perhaps he will go down in medical textbooks as an astonishing case of referred pain; a man who, if elbowed on the shoulder, falls clutching his face. That was an afternoon on which I, long so well disposed to Charlton, ceased to care very much if they stayed up or went down.

OFT win could spell TV hell

THE CASE brought against the Premiership by the Office of Fair Trading – accusing the clubs of running a cartel to force TV companies to pay over the odds for television rights – seems to me an example of pure busy idleness.

Do the officious officials who have implemented it really believe that fans will be any better off should the case be won by the OFT? If anything, the lesser Premiership clubs would be in severe danger of going to the wall, as the Manchester Uniteds, Liverpools and Arsenals grabbed the lion's share of pay-per-view; a scenario that, alas, may ultimately happen anyway.

I say alas because, in such circumstances, a club like Wimbledon, who have shown such amazing resourcefulness and resilience over the years, would find it impossible to compete. Nor do I believe that fans, least of all the armchair kind, have a divine right to watch live football.

Besides, the viewing figures of a million or so for football games shown on satellite TV is hardly relevant or real, because so much of the coverage (and there is, of course, far too much of it on far too many different days) is watched in pubs and clubs.

Above all, I see a tremendous irony here. The real cartel, maintained over so many years because the clubs were so ill-led and feeble, was surely that operated by the BBC and ITV, when the likes of John Bromley – now a Sky TV executive! – sneered at football's alleged lack of appeal.

The present situation is very far from ideal. The Greed is Good League has grabbed far too much of the TV money. But chaos and anarchy could ensue if the OFT win their case.

Europe won't play ball

TRUST Sepp Blatter to pour oil on soccer's bonfire. Hardly had Europe's greedy major clubs forced UEFA to devise an appallingly over-populated and over-demanding club competition schedule for next season than the FIFA president comes up with his absurd proposal to have the World Cup every two years.

True, Blatter has snubbed the ludicrous proposal from IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch that countries should field their full national sides during Olympic competition. But a biennial World Cup? UEFA president Lennart Johansson has made it clear that European countries wouldn't stand for it, and I could see them withdrawing were Blatter to bypass the FIFA executive, go straight to full congress, and push his abomination through with the votes of the African nations, plus, perhaps, the USA and some Asian countries.

Fight on his hands...Sepp Blatter

Meanwhile, the slithery Germans have agreed to take part in Blatter's abysmal Confederations Cup, replacing the French who changed their minds about going after pressure from their League. I wonder, in this context, whether we've heard the last from the Bundesliga and their teams.

Fascetti wrong again

WITH AN enemy like Eugenio Fascetti, who needs friends? The Bari manager attacked David Platt's appointment as technical director at Sampdoria, threatening a strike by Italy's coaches and saying that the hiring of the former Samp and England player was like asking a student nurse to perform an operation. But this opinion has not been supported by Platt's first few games in charge.

Early in the 1982 World Cup, it was Fascetti, that garrulous Tuscan, who made a vicious attack on Enzo Bearzot and his Italy team at Coverciano, the coaching centre. He was almost certainly inspired to do this by the serpentine Italo Allodi, who was in charge there at the time. Then Bearzot won the World Cup!

Platt attack...Eugenio Fascetti

March 1971

LEV YASHIN, perhaps the finest goalkeeper ever, contributed a column to *World Soccer* this month 28 years ago, and told readers that his appearance for the Rest of the World against England in 1963 was the greatest honour of his career.

As for England skipper Bobby Moore, Yashin wrote: "He reads the game perfectly. It must be good to play behind him."

A preview of the European quarter-finals was headed "Everton can win Champions Cup" – but they lost to Panathinaikos, who went on to reach the Final at Wembley, where they lost to Johan Cruyff's Ajax.

Manchester City captain Tony Book described Leeds United as "the best club side in the world – unbeatable at their best". Leeds went on to beat Juventus in the UEFA Cup Final that year – poor Juve losing on away goals after winning eight and drawing four of their 12 matches in the competition.

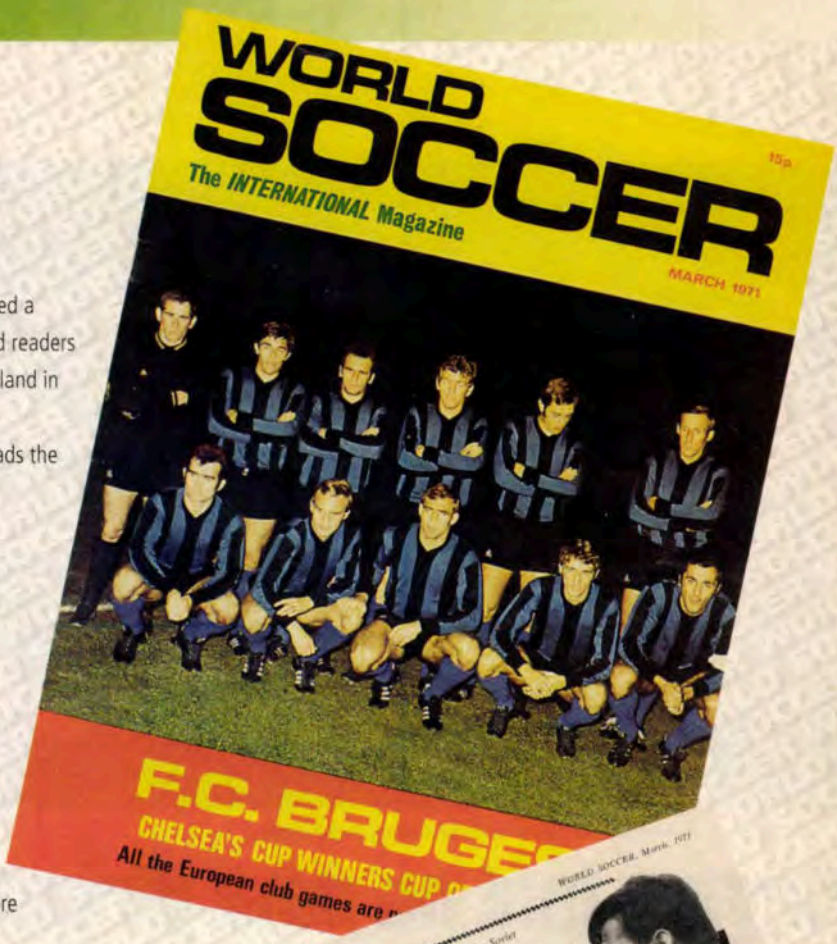
In the Cup-winners Cup, Cardiff were tipped to give Real Madrid a tough time – and they did, winning 1-0 at home before losing 2-0 away. Real lost to Chelsea in a replayed Final.

Elsewhere in the issue, we revealed that Lazio's former Swansea forward, Giorgio Chinaglia, had sent his pregnant wife into hiding; his poor form was leading supporters to insult and ridicule her every time she went out.

We claimed that English referees were losing their reputation as the world's best, mainly because of their tolerant attitude towards rough play.

And we reported that Bruno Pesaola of Fiorentina had become the third Serie A coach to be sacked during the season.

Not much changes.



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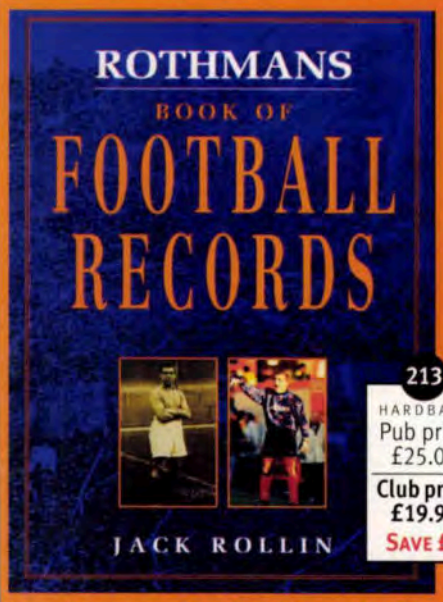

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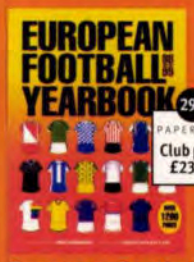

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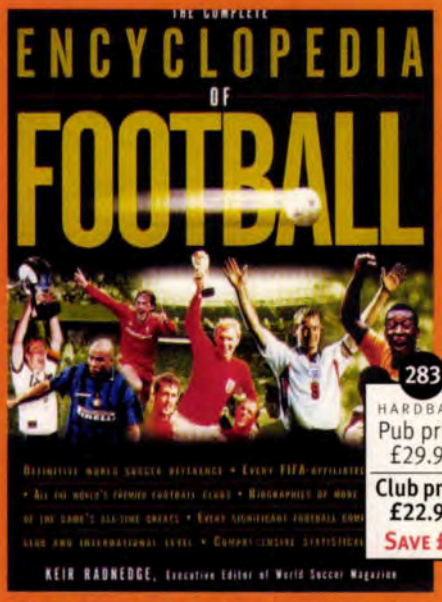

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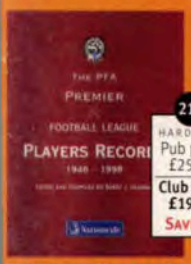

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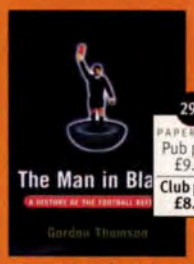

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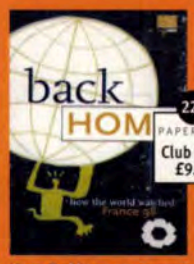

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